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SIX CLASSIC RECIPES

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OUR FIVE FAVORITE

AMERICAN FOOD TOWNS

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REAL MEXICAN

*Celebrating
family with fresh
salsa and chiles
rellenos at a
California winery*

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THE EASY ART OF HUNGARIAN GOULASH

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NUMBER **96**

OCTOBER 2006 \$5.00 (CANADA \$6.00)



*Available fall 2006.

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Greg Higgins, Chef/Owner, Higgins Restaurant and Bar, Portland, Oregon



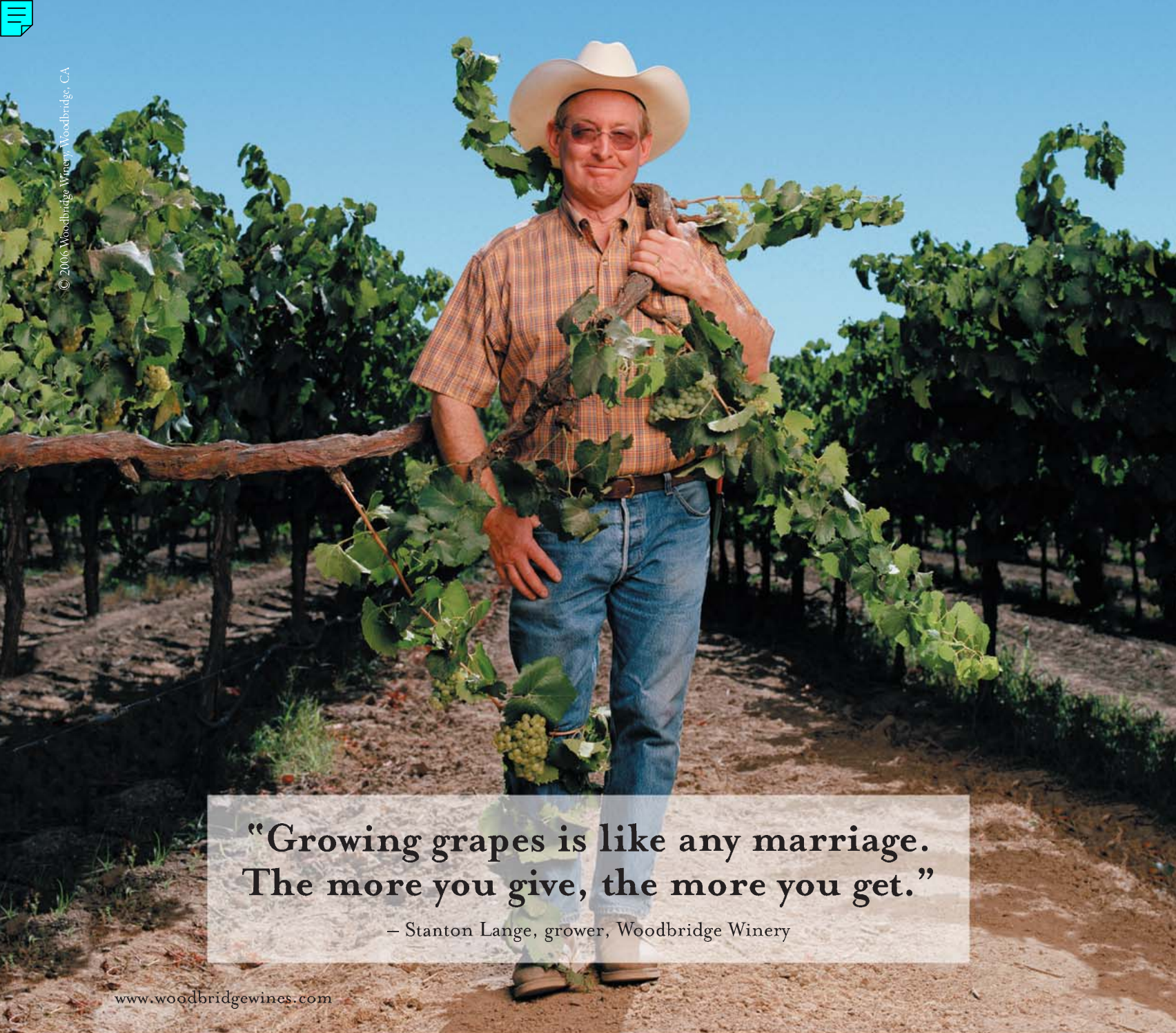


THE OREGON CHEF

AS IN SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T BELIEVE IN TURNING RICH SOIL INTO PARKING LOTS FOR STRIP MALLS WHERE WE EAT FOOD SHIPPED IN A CAN FROM TIMBUKTU, BUT RATHER IN TURNING RICH SOIL INTO RICH, FLAVORFUL BEETS AND BERRIES AND HAZELNUTS AND WITH THEM CONCOCTING DELICIOUS, DELECTABLE FOOD FROM YOUR OWN SOIL.
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There is a chef called Greg Higgins who rode out west—on his bicycle—and when he got to Oregon, as one might imagine after having biked all the way from New York, he was very hungry. Down in the valley there were organic hazelnuts and squash, broccoli and herbs, apples and pears, beets and berries. And over to his right in the huge open spaces were big, beautiful beef cattle roaming freely about, munching on grass. On the coast he found fresh line-caught salmon and cod, pink shrimp and Dungeness crab. And as his belly grumbled away, he had a crazy idea. He called up Cory Schreiber and Vitaly Paley and other Oregonian chefs, who too were hungry to create something extraordinary, and they made a pact. Their goal: to create an Oregon cuisine using local wine, meats, fruits and vegetables. Food full of unique Oregon flavor and the peace of mind that the rich Oregon soil would stay rich Oregon soil. And not to their surprise, after a while, people began to say, "Let's eat Oregonian tonight. And tomorrow night. And the next night." And now it is easy to find delicious Oregon cuisine: Come to Oregon.

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BY ROBERT MONDAVI

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SAVEUR

FEATURES

WINE FOR THE FAMILY

50 Every Sunday, gathering for a bountiful Mexican lunch and good wine from their own California vineyards, former migrant worker Reynaldo Robledo and his kin toast the American dream.

BY MARGO TRUE



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: BEN FINK; JÖRG BROCKMANN; JAMES OSELAND

COVER

Maria Robledo's chiles rellenos with salsa and chips.
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI

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BY KELLY ALEXANDER



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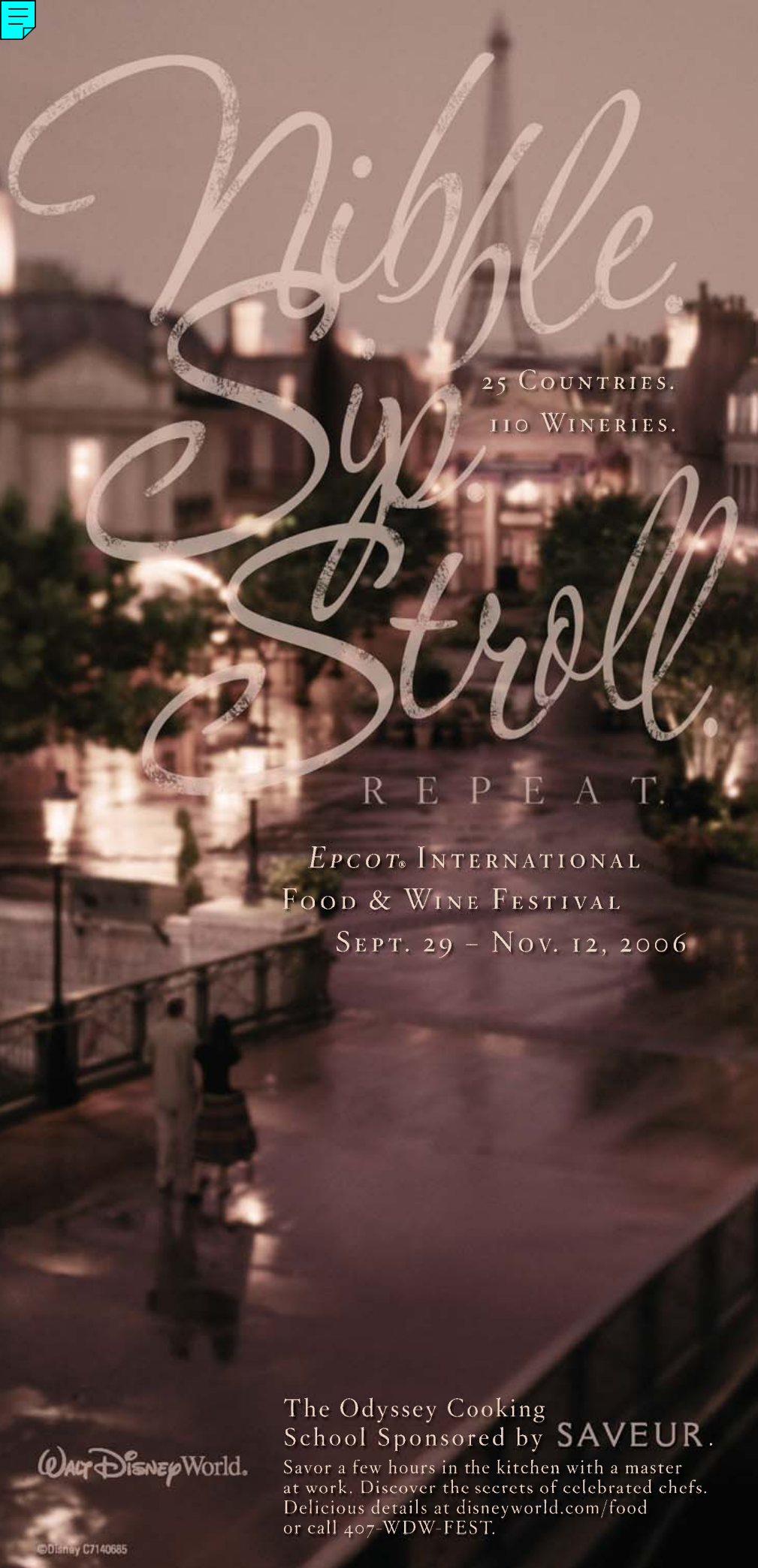


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Festival Poster by John Hiemstra

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SAVEUR'S GUIDE TO EVENTS, PROMOTIONS, AND PRODUCTS



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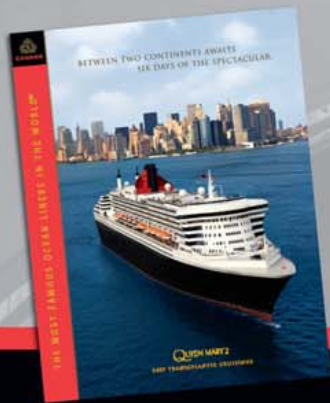
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FIRST

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Okay, buddy, drop the Butt Rub

ALL EYES WERE ON ME as I answered their questions for the umpteenth time.

"What do you do?"

"I'm a magazine food editor."

"Why are you in Florida?"

"I'm researching a story for *Saveur*."

"They think it's the food that did it," a police officer behind me said.

Last June I was in Apalachicola, a seaside town in Florida, on the Gulf of Mexico, to report on its food scene for our "Food Towns" list (see page 28). In the course of eating a lot of great food, I picked up a few souvenirs: an Apalachicola oyster shell, a "honey bear" full of Apalachicola River tupelo honey, and a jar of barbecue seasoning called Bad Byron's Butt Rub. The night before I was scheduled to fly back home, I packed up those items, along with some notepads and a combination video/voice recorder.

The next morning at the Tallahassee airport, I complied with the usual security rules, placing my bag on the conveyor belt that takes luggage through a scanner. When I walked over to retrieve my bag, I noticed that the conveyor belt had stopped. Several Transportation Security Administration screeners had gathered around the monitor and were staring at it intently. One of them asked, "Do you have anything in your bag that you shouldn't have?" As I turned, I saw that all the passengers at the security checkpoint were being pushed away, their baggage still sitting where they'd left it. Seconds later, I was being frisked by a cop. I was then escorted outside; the place was swarming with police and firemen. They were sending a robot into the now evacuated airport to retrieve my bag. They thought there was a bomb in it.

I was detained in an RV mobile command center surrounded by security personnel. The bomb-



Coleman, above, back in New York. Below, the "explosive" contents of his carry-on bag.

squad robot took my bag into an empty field and shook its contents onto the ground. No bomb, of course—just my souvenirs. To those looking at the scanning machine, they, along with my recorder, had apparently resembled explosives hooked up to a detonator.

After being held for nearly five hours, I was released. The airport's administration made it up to me by throwing a press conference and buying me a cheeseburger lunch.

Later, waiting for my plane back to New York, I overheard a guy saying on his cell phone, "I don't even know if I should get on. I heard that a guy tried to bring a bomb on board earlier."

No, I wanted to tell him, I was just trying to get my Butt Rub home. —TODD COLEMAN, *Food Editor*



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FARE

Explorers and Experimenters from the World of Food, plus One Good Bottle, Agenda, and More

AGENDA

OCTOBER

6-8

CALIFORNIA AVOCADO FESTIVAL

Carpinteria, California

Every October, the Santa Barbara County beach town of Carpinteria honors its signature fruit: the avocado. Against a backdrop of gentle hills blanketed with avocado trees, roughly 100,000 people gather over the weekend to indulge in dishes incorporating the succulent fruit, such as avocado-topped tacos and tri-tip beef sandwiches, and, of course, guacamole (over 2,000 pounds of it is made fresh for the festival). Don't forget to save room for avocado ice cream and this year's special, avocado pound cake. Information: 805/684-0038.

OCTOBER

7

DAN SIRUNA

Budva, Montenegro

After the summer tourists have dispersed, residents of the coastal town of Budva reclaim the sea for *dan siruna*, "day of the fish", a celebration of the start of the fishing season. For the past 50 years, the medieval town square has been crowded with visitors who come to dance to live music while feasting on local seafood. Mediterranean and Adriatic species, including orata, branzino, and john dory, are grilled and served with lemon. Regional beverages like vranac (a tannic red wine), krstac (white wine), and Niksicko (a pale lager) fuel the footloose throughout the night. Information: 381/81/235 157.

A Backpacker's Banquet

We had a sweet tooth; they had peanuts and bananas

ONLY THE MOST gastronomically challenged visitor to Southeast Asia would turn up his nose at the region's flavorful curries, satays, and stir-fries for Western fare, right? But backpackers are a special case. Meandering for months with a heavy load, consuming all kinds of grub in all manner of guesthouses and street-food stands, they eventually develop a hankering for the tastes of home—a natural symptom of road weariness. Depending on where home is, they might crave anything from shakshuka, a dish of eggs in tomato sauce beloved by Israelis, to banana pancakes—and, surprisingly, they have a pretty good chance of finding it.

Roadside cafés and guesthouse kitchens from India to Vietnam serve non-native dishes like those. Why? I have a theory: a backpacker, lingering in some exotic place with nothing but time on his or her hands and an appetite for a culinary touchstone, hunts down the requisite ingredients and cooks up something in a local place, in the process teaching the dish to its owner, who then replicates it for future wayfarers. Eventually, neighboring establishments clone the dish, and it appears across the region.

While passing through Muang Ngoi, a rural fishing village along



An eatery advertising "falang roll" in the village of Muang Ngoi in Laos.

the languid Nam Ou River in northern Laos, my girlfriend and I unexpectedly left our own culinary legacy behind. After dining at an eatery we chose at random along the main road, we decided

that we needed dessert. We asked the proprietor whether we could make our own, and he grudgingly agreed. We gathered some bananas and peanuts (both are popular local ingredients), blended the peanuts

OCTOBER

12

ANNIVERSARY:
OKTOBERFEST

1810, Munich

When Crown Prince Ludwig married Princess Therese of Saxony-Hildburghausen, he invited all of Munich to celebrate. The royalty-sponsored event brought the citizens so much *Fröhlichkeit* (good cheer) that the



party was repeated the following year. In 1818, beer was introduced. Locals polished off any remaining *märzen*—a beer traditionally brewed during the month of March—and have done so every year since.

OCTOBER

13–15

FESTIVALS ACADIENS

Lafayette, Louisiana

Citizens of Lafayette pay homage to their Acadian ancestry with a party packed with live music, local crafts, and roux-laden bayou cooking. The Bayou Food Festival portion celebrates both Cajun and Creole cooking. About a dozen of the best nearby restaurants whip up their specialties, like *étouffée*, crawfish beignets, and jambalaya. *Laissez les bon temps rouler!* Information: 800/346-1958.

OCTOBER

14

TURKEY TESTICLE FESTIVAL

Byron, Illinois

You're guaranteed to have a ball—or several—at this annual tribute to the turkey testicle. Since 1978, revelers have been savoring the specialty, dipped in beer batter and then deep-fried until golden brown. This year volunteers hope to cook up 360 pounds of the dubious delicacy for 2,000 hungry visitors (adults only). The \$5 admission fee will get you an order of fried testicles, a full day of live country rock entertainment, and a chance to win prizes in a raffle. Information: 815/234-9910.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



"Let onion atoms lurk within the bowl, and, half-suspected, animate the whole."

—SYDNEY SMITH, "RECIPE FOR A SALAD", IN A LETTER TO LADY HARDY, 1839

into butter, spread the peanut butter onto a rectangle of flattened sticky rice, placed the sliced bananas on top, and then rolled the rectangle into a log, sprinkling the outside with sesame seeds. We found some honey for dipping, sliced the roll into pieces, and voilà! Dessert sushi. We thought it was delicious. The proprietor didn't. He went along, however, when we added it to his menu board, naming it "falang roll", using a rendition of the Lao (and Thai) term for foreigner.

We continued on our journey

and never returned to Muang Ngoi. I have since learned, though, that the falang roll has become a hit there, even generating its own lore. I discovered an entry about it on a travel blog, describing it as having been created by "some falang who stayed for weeks in Muang Ngoi and taught them how to make this sort of dessert sushi" (in fact we were there for only two days) and noting that

the rolls, at about \$1.20 a serving, were the most expensive item on the menu. The proprietors are even pushing the falang roll on a hand-painted sign that hangs prominently outside their stand.

Falang roll will most likely never appear in the annals of culinary history, but I figure the chances of its spreading beyond Muang Ngoi are pretty good. For all I know, it already has. —*Andy Isaacson*

RECIPE

Falang Roll

(Foreigner Roll)

MAKES 4

This energy-boosting treat is a twist on the peanut butter, banana, and honey sandwich—a perennial American favorite.

3 cups thai sticky rice
3/4 cup crunchy peanut butter, softened
2 bananas, peeled and sliced lengthwise into 6 pieces each
1 tbsp. sesame seeds
Honey for dipping

1. Put rice into a large bowl, cover with cold water, and gently swish around with your hand until water clouds; drain water. Repeat process until water runs clear. Cover rice with at least 2" cold water and let soak at room temperature for 3 hours. (Alternatively, soak in the refrigerator overnight.)

2. Fill bottom of a medium steamer or wok with water and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Meanwhile, line steamer basket with a piece of cheesecloth large enough to hang over sides of basket by 1". Drain rice, then spread it out in an even layer in the lined basket. Cover rice completely with overhanging cheesecloth. Cover steamer basket and set over boiling water to let steam for 20 minutes, adding hot water to steamer or wok as necessary to maintain water level. Remove cover from steamer basket and sprinkle 1/2 cup warm water over cheesecloth-covered rice; return cover and continue to steam until rice is tender and cooked through, 15-18 minutes more. Unwrap rice and transfer to a sheet pan; cover with a damp towel. Let cool to room temperature.

3. Cover a bamboo sushi-rolling mat tightly with plastic wrap. Moisten your fingertips with water and gently spread out one-quarter of the rice onto the mat into a 4" x 7" rectangle (don't pack the rice). Spread 3 tbsp. peanut butter evenly over rice, then place 3 pieces of banana along the side closest to you. Using the mat to help you, roll the rice over and around the bananas to form a tight sushi roll, pressing down firmly to seal the roll. Sprinkle roll with some sesame seeds and cut crosswise into 6 equal pieces. Repeat process with remaining rice, peanut butter, bananas, and sesame seeds. Divide rolls between 4 plates with honey on the side for dipping. Serve promptly.



FARE

Truculent but Tender

An unfriendly llama has a second life on the plate



HE WAS AN ALOOF one-year-old llama. The eight other llamas with whom he shared pasture space on my friend's mother's farm in Oregon were destined for long, peaceful lives, but this male—with his standoffish attitude and his hereditary three pairs of sharp, angled fighting teeth—had to be culled. A short while after the job was done, my friend's mother flew from Oregon to New York with a suitcase packed with a few pounds of llama meat for me. As a curious eater, I welcome the occasional gift of unfamiliar

victuals, and I wanted to do this one justice. If you've eaten llama, chances are you got it, as I did, from someone who raises the beasts as guard animals or pets (a Google search for "llama recipes" turns up far more results for what to feed a llama than for how to eat one).

Even in its homeland, in the Andes of Peru, the llama is much more a pack animal than it is a food source. When it is eaten, it is considered a provincial specialty rather than a mainstream meat. A Peruvian friend did manage to find a rec-

ipe for me, though—for pachamanca, a traditional meat dish cooked in an earthen oven and prepared for village fêtes.

I didn't have a whole village to feed, so I scaled the recipe down to make it serve four people. A friend with a house in Brooklyn offered her backyard, and with her help we dug a pit, lined it with foil, and added preheated stones. In the hot pit I placed lean hunks of llama meat, which I'd marinated with garlic, vinegar, and Peruvian rocoto chiles. I also piled in potatoes, ears of corn, lamb chops, and tamales, all liberally strewn with cinnamon, sage, and chiles. While the

pachamanca cooked, we prepared llama-based versions of several additional dishes, including llama-stuffed cabbage, llama lomo saltado, and—I couldn't resist the pun—a spicy version of the Turkish dish of ground-meat-topped flat bread called lahmacun.

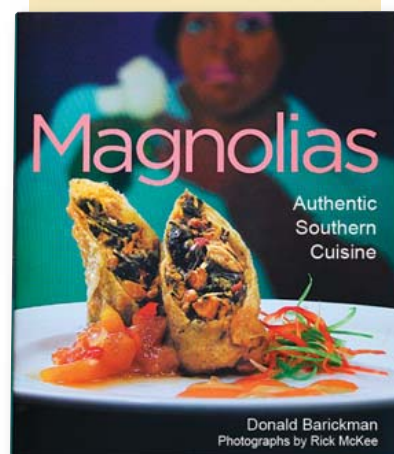
After five hours, it was time to unearth the steamy smorgasbord. One guest was squeamish about eating what he called "a cute llama" and settled, unaccountably, for lamb. The rest of us enjoyed a uniquely delicious meat. Llama has the

tang of grass-fed beef but none of that meat's heaviness; instead, in each of the preparations, it was remarkably tender and delicate. This animal had reportedly had a predilection for blackberries, and it was almost possible to discern their tartness.

My first llama experience has left me looking forward to a second one, and, attuned to the unsuspected culinary potential of novel animals, I am keeping my eyes open for other delicious beasts with an attitude problem. (For details on purchasing llama meat, see *THE PANTRY*, page 102.) —Paul Adams

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It's authentic, it's Southern, it's a spring roll...?



ONE GOOD BOTTLE

Field blends—wines made from assorted grape varieties picked and vinified together (as opposed to cellar blends, where finished wines are mixed)—used to be common in California but are rare today. You'll wonder why when you sample



OAKVILLE RANCH NAPA VALLEY FIELD BLEND 2004 (\$30), a juicy, fruity, vaguely Italian-tasting red made mostly from zinfandel with some carignane and petite sirah included. The winery recommends listening to The Iguanas and Lucinda Williams whilst sipping it. Well, okay. (See *THE PANTRY*, page 102, for a source.) —THE EDITORS

OCTOBER

14-19

DOBUROKU MATSURI

Shirakawago, Japan

For nearly 1,300 years, the village of Shirakawago has hosted the annual Doburoku Matsuri (Sake Festival), where residents come together to pray for safety and a good rice crop. Participants offer doburoku, a thick and sweet unrefined sake, to the gods as a symbol of gratitude. After purchasing a special sake cup at a shrine, you may enjoy all-you-can-drink doburoku for the day. Street stalls sell snacks like octopus dumplings and rice cakes stuffed with red bean paste. Information: 81/5769 61311.

OCTOBER

21-22

FOIRE DE LA CHÂTAIGNE

Mourjou, France

Each year the village of Mourjou (population 350) attracts 20,000 visitors to honor the town's cherished chestnuts. More than 4,000 pounds of roasted chestnuts and 1,500 gallons of apple cider will be sold in the town's central market, alongside other chest-

nut-based products, including breads, chocolates, pastries, jams, and even beer. Nut lovers may also take a stroll

through the chestnut groves and visit a local chestnut museum. Information: 33/471 49 69 34.



OCTOBER

31

BIRTHDAY:

JOE CARCIONE

1914, San Francisco

Throughout the 1970s, on television channels and radio stations, a voice could be heard proclaiming, "I'm Joe Carcione, your greengrocer, with your tip for the day." Carcione's advice also appeared in two books and a regular newspaper column. His message? Eat your "vedja-tobbles", as this amiable Italian-American, who died in 1988, pronounced it. "Fruit talks to you," he would say—and he helped fruit talk to more than 10 million listeners and viewers during his lifetime.

FARE

G.I. Grub

A history of military meals brings back fond memories



RECIPE

Shit on a Shingle

(Creamed Chipped Beef on Toast)

SERVES 10

This recipe is based on one in the *Manual for Navy Cooks* (published in 1945). For a traditional, saltier version, don't soak the beef.

10 ounces dried sliced beef, chopped into 1/2" pieces (about 3 cups chopped; see page 102)

7 1/2 cups milk

1/3 cup melted bacon grease

1 cup flour

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

20 slices white sandwich bread, toasted

1. Put beef into a large bowl, cover with cold water, and let soak for 3-5 minutes (depending on how salty you'd like the finished product). Drain beef and set aside.

2. Put milk into a large pot and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Meanwhile, put bacon grease and flour into a medium bowl and stir well to form a smooth paste. Reduce heat to medium-low, whisk flour paste into milk, and cook, stirring constantly, until thickened, about 2-3 minutes. Add beef, season with salt and pepper to taste, and simmer until very thick, about 5 minutes more. Ladle the creamed chipped beef over toast and serve immediately. No griping!

WHEN I WAS a teenager I dreamed of becoming a cook in the military. I was an air force brat, the son of a major, and my career aspirations had been stimulated by visits to various O (officers') clubs around the world with my father. I was entranced by the toque-topped cooks slicing glazed hams at Eglin Air Force Base, in Florida, by the layered Jell-O and whipped cream confections served at Offutt Air Force Base, in Nebraska, and by the World War II-era dining hall

at an army post in Germany where I buttered my rolls under portraits of generals. I wanted in.

I eventually gave up my dreams, but I never gave up my romantic attachment to the idea. I loved the concept of chow—of food and camaraderie, and lots of it. When I recently discovered the new book *How to Feed an Army: Recipes and Lore from the Front Lines* by J. G. Lewin and P. J. Huff (Collins, \$15.95), I knew I had found like-minded souls. Lewin and Huff are amateur historians who are less in-

terested in battle plans than they are in what went into the soldiers' bellies before the fight. Their book is packed with recipes taken from training manuals and military cookbooks—a hundred in all, spanning the Revolutionary War through the current campaign in Iraq—including such items as sweet and sour frankfurters (a

MILITARY MESS SLANG

Armored cow: canned milk | **Battery acid:** coffee | **Bellyrobber:** the mess sergeant | **Bubble dancer:** a soldier on K.P. (kitchen patrol)—i.e., washing dishes or suchlike | **Crumb hunt:** an inspection by officers of the mess hall and kitchen | **Cus-tard grenade:** cream puff | **DFAC:** dining facility—i.e., mess hall | **Fish eyes:** tapioca pudding | **Goldfish:** salmon | **Grass:** salad | **Hard soup:** liquor | **Pogey:** candy or other sweets | **Slumbers:** cooks | **Willie:** canned corned beef



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FARE

delicious Vietnam War-era concoction) and slumgullion (an improvised stew from First World War days).

Mess hall meals have always gotten a bad rap. No dish better illustrates that tradition than the infamous mess hall icon of creamed chipped beef on toast, acrimoniously nicknamed S.O.S.—for “shit on a shingle”. That term was forbidden at Fairchild Air Force Base near Spokane, Washington, where my dad was in basic

survival training in the '60s, though. The cook there wouldn't tolerate the acronyms and slang that grunts are famous for coming up with (see box, page 20); his rule was that if you wanted creamed chipped beef on toast, you had to order it by that name.

The truth is, in any case, that S.O.S. is a delicious, satisfying dish, reminiscent of biscuits with sausage gravy. It makes a great way to start off the day, before you go off to fight the good fight. —*Todd Coleman*

What Would James Bond Think?

Today's spies probably drink chardonnay with their steak

JAMES BOND DRANK Bollinger; one of John Le Carré's heroes made wine in the English countryside; Len Deighton, the author of the Harry Palmer spy novels, is a noted expert on food and drink. But what's with all these other guys? Almost every time we find a reference to wine or spirits in a thriller or a detective novel these days, the writer gets it wrong. For instance...



THE BOOK	THE MISTAKE	WHY IT'S WRONG
Brandenburg by Glenn Meade (St. Martin's Press, 1997)	"She...bought fresh fish and vegetables and two bottles of Sauterne and intended cooking dinner for both of them."	"Sauterne" is cheap California jug wine; the French stuff is sauternes—and it's sweet, not something you'd drink with fish.
A Conspiracy of Tall Men by Noah Hawley (Harmony Books, 1998)	"Ford orders an Italian burgundy."	Yeah? So, why not a French chianti instead?
Courier's Fist by Harvey A. Eysman (Beaufort Books, 1981)	"[W]ith the entrée, a Latour. What years do you have?' 'I am sorry, sir,' the steward intoned, devastated by the admission. 'The only year we have left is '61...' 'Well then, give us something that you would recommend in a good year.'"	The 1961 vintage was excellent. To quote Robert Parker on the '61 Latour: "An extraordinary wine, it is unquestionably one of the Bordeaux legends of the century!"
McNally's Dare by Vincent Lardo (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2003)	"Father decanted a bottle of Rosso de Montalcino, a pretentious Tuscan delight...."	It's rosso di, and though it can be excellent wine, it is moderately priced and distinctly unpretentious. (Lardo was probably thinking of its brother, brunello di montalcino.)
The Monkey's Fist by William D. Pease (Onyx, 1997)	"Treshkov... [took] a long swallow of Piesporter Michelsberg '89. 'Not a grand grape, the Mosel, but I rather like it.'"	The Mosel is a wine region, not a grape—and riesling, from which Piesporter Michelsberg is made, is indeed a grand grape.
Spy Dance by Allan Topol (Onyx, 2001)	"Also on the tray was a bottle of fifty-year-old Remy Martin."	Rémy Martin isn't vintage-dated, so there'd be no way of knowing its age.



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BOOK REVIEW

Inside Sushi

A comprehensive new book invites everyone to make the Japanese classic

BY KENNETH WAPNER

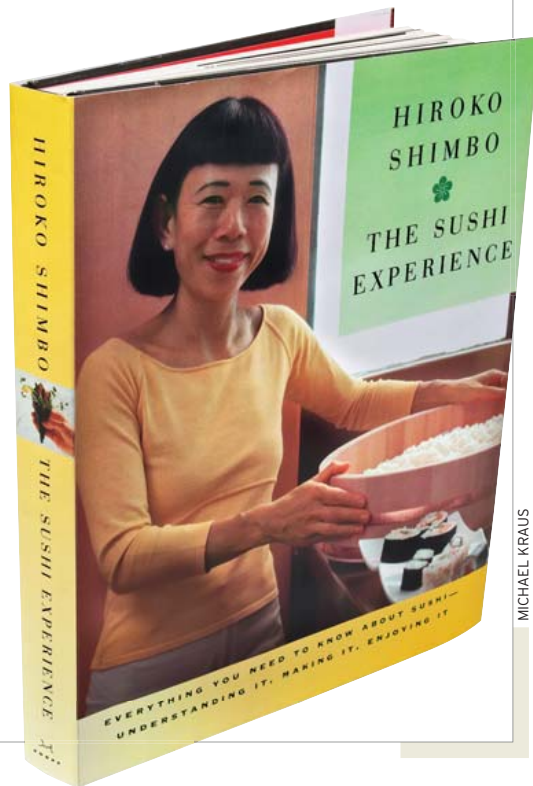
IN THE 1970s I worked for a sushi chef at a Japanese restaurant in New York City called SoHo Robata. I was in my 20s, an unsure but willing apprentice. My mentor was a staunch traditionalist, having been apprenticed himself to a sushi chef in Japan when he was in his teens. At the time, sushi was largely unheard of in the United States except in places like New York and Los Angeles, where a population of Japanese expats and Hollywood agents made the consumption of delicately prepared raw fish the newest dining experience. Although my stint didn't last nearly as long as that of the typical Japanese sushi chef (a period of anywhere from five to 15 years), I left my station behind the sushi bar forever fascinated by the culture and artistry of sushi.

In her new book, *The Sushi Experience*, Hiroko Shimbo writes about how her own fascination with the food developed when she was a child living in Japan. On special occasions her mother would order out for sushi, and, as a rare treat, Shimbo would go with her family to a sushi restaurant. "To walk into the impeccably clean restaurant was like entering a shrine," she writes. Recalling her first impression of a sushi chef, she adds, "He delivered the beautiful sushi calmly and confidently.... [F]rom a child's point of view, his finesse seemed miraculous."

Shimbo is the author of the acclaimed *The Japanese Kitchen* (Harvard Common Press, 2000) and is herself a trained sushi chef. In her latest book, she presents sushi within the larger context of Japanese food. In its first chapters, the book offers information that will help any reader impress fellow diners at their next sushi dinner, with explorations of the history of sushi, the character of sushi chefs, and the rituals of eating at a sushi bar (the next time you enjoy a really good piece

of sushi, Shimbo advises, be sure to compliment the maestro with "Oishii!" ["Delicious!"]). But it is in subsequent chapters that the book really takes off. In them are fascinating sections on the art of Japanese knife making; the pairing of sake and sushi; and the cleaning and storing of an *oroshiki*, the tool traditionally made from sharkskin that sushi chefs use to grate fresh wasabi.

Shimbo's soulful knowledge of Japanese food distinguishes *The Sushi Experience* from the many books on sushi already available. In her instructions on the preparing of daikon, the white radish commonly used as a sushi garnish, for instance, she recommends letting it rest in a sieve over a bowl: "The collected juice is full of vitamin C, so drink it diluted with some water." I also admired her tips on making dashi-maki tamago, the sweet, multilayered omelette that is an essential part of any sushi chef's repertoire; and her simple recipe for gari (pickled ginger) is one that any home cook could



MICHAEL KRAUS

KENNETH WAPNER, who lives in Woodstock, New York, wrote "Number One Tempura" for the December 2004 issue of *SAVEUR*.

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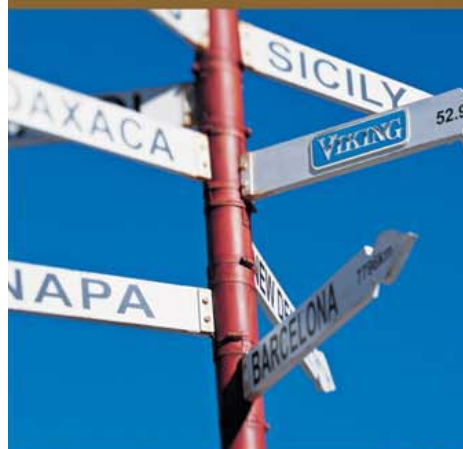
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FARE

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follow, with pleasing results.

Each of Shimbo's recipes is accompanied by an introduction explaining the dish's background. In many cases there are also step-by-step technique photographs and a sidebar with additional tips. For shrimp tempura roll, she gives us not only guidance on making tempura batter but also a sidebar on cutting the shrimp so that it doesn't curl up.

Besides recipes for staple favorites like negi-toro temaki (tuna and scallion roll) and kappa-maki (thin roll with cucumber), Shimbo offers more-intriguing ones. I tried the recipe for beef and crisp sweet potato roll; it made for an incredibly appealing combination of flavors. I also tried a recipe for chicken teriyaki roll that involved marinating chicken thigh meat for 30 minutes in beer, soy, honey, and ginger and then cooking it with shishitogarashi (Japanese green pepper). I couldn't locate the Japanese pepper, so I substituted frying peppers, per Shimbo's instructions. I thought the outcome was fine, although the flavor imparted by the beer struck me as a bit un-Japanese.

One chapter that I found particularly useful is titled "Sushi Seafood". In it Shimbo clues readers in on how to order engawa, the edge or fin of flatfish, a delicacy that chefs may reserve for select customers, and how to distinguish between buri, mature yellowtail, and hamachi (yellowtail in its young adult form).

I'd like to believe that the fishing and slaughtering techniques for fish destined for the sushi trade are as widely practiced as Shimbo seems to indicate. Sushi-grade fish, she writes, should have been caught by "pole and line...and quickly transferred, alive, to a tank of sea water". She goes on, "After resting overnight at the port to recover from any stress, the fish is slaughtered...instantaneously, so that it undergoes the least struggle and stress." Shimbo does the reader a great service by outlining the process that occurs after the fish's death, leading up to and through rigor mortis, as the lactic acid produced by it changes the texture and taste of its flesh. Readers will come away with a new understanding of why "freshest" isn't necessarily the best.

Methods for filleting fish are laid out in photographs, but readers may find that even given Shimbo's precise directions they'll neverthe-

FOOD FOR THOUGHT



"I will not move my army without onions."

—ATTRIBUTED TO GENERAL ULYSSES S. GRANT

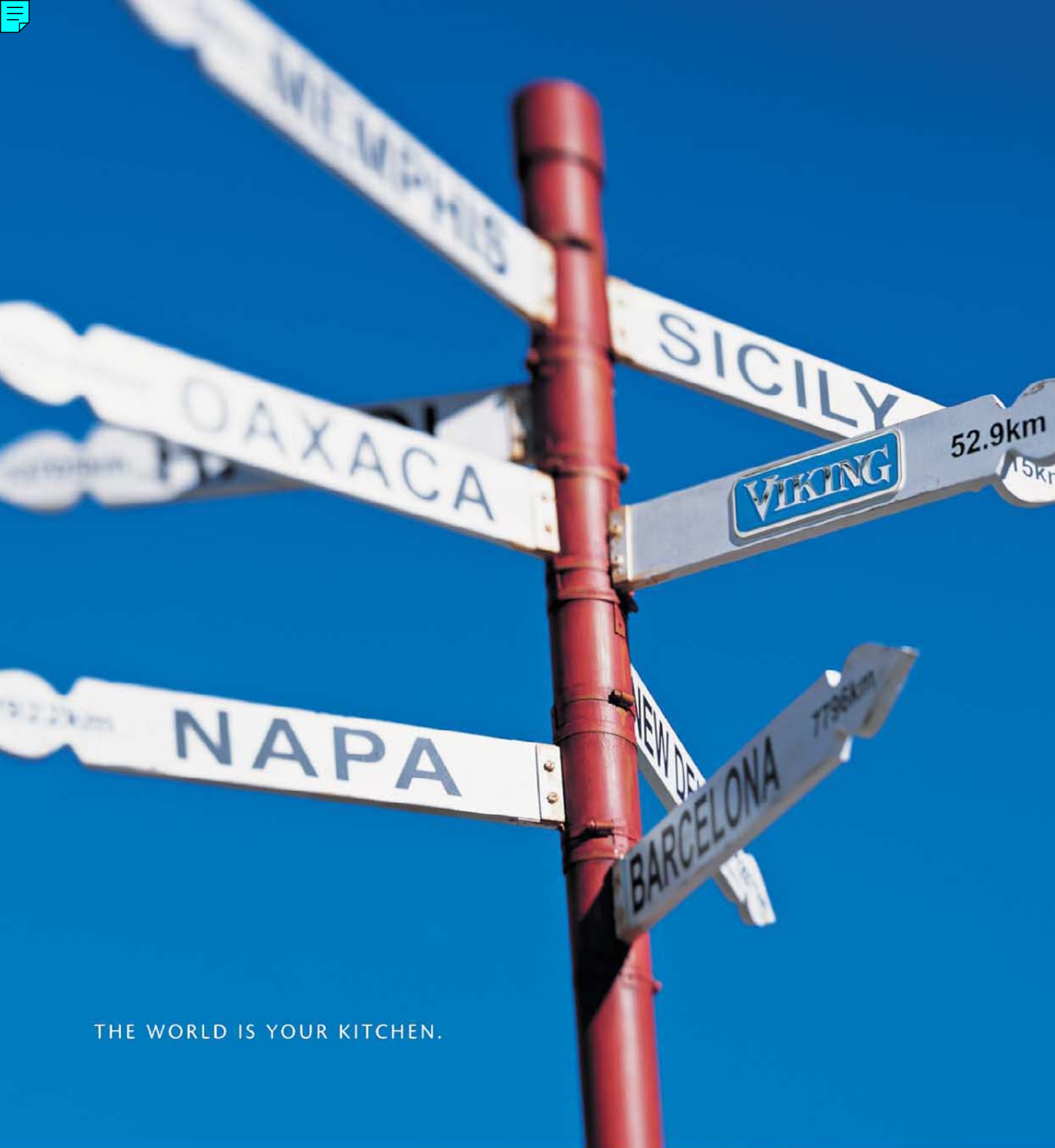
less need practice to achieve sushi-worthy slices of fish. Still, Shimbo optimistically asserts that "preparing sushi is a lot like putting together a sandwich and not much more difficult". Well, sort of.

Other books have covered terrain similar to that in *The Sushi Experience*, but they lack Shimbo's friendly, encouraging approach. She has created an essential addition to the library of any sushi lover—including me—both for use in the kitchen and as

an etiquette guide at the sushi bar. To that, I say, "Oishiii!"

10 HELPFUL TIPS FROM
THE SUSHI EXPERIENCE

- 1 | By toasting a sheet of nori, you can revive its fragrance and make it even crisper.
- 2 | Rice sold soon after harvest is labeled shin-mai (new harvest). Shin-mai is delicious as table rice but is too moist and tender for sushi.
- 3 | When spreading sushi rice over the nori, do not press tightly. The rice should have the appearance of snow that has just fallen to the ground.
- 4 | If you're worried about the safety of eating raw fish, you can rinse the fish in freshly brewed and cooled tea, which acts as a sterilizing agent.
- 5 | Before grating fresh wasabi, sprinkle the grater with sugar, salt, or lemon juice, any of which will extract more flavor from the rhizome.
- 6 | When shopping for mirin (sweet rice wine), find a brand that has a relatively high alcohol content and does not have corn syrup or another form of sugar as its first ingredient.
- 7 | If shoyu (soy sauce) is of good quality, a drop in a glass of cold water should hold its shape.
- 8 | Pour a bottle of sake that has sat on the shelf too long into your bath. The organic acids will make your skin smooth and moist.
- 9 | When you take a seat at a sushi bar, greet your chef with "Yoroshiku" ("Please treat me kindly").
- 10 | Because disposable chopsticks can be rough, some people rub them together to remove splinters. Doing this at a good restaurant, though, is considered poor manners.



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THE SAVEUR LIST

5 Food Towns

From the Gulf Coast to the Pacific, these unsung burgers really cook

AMERICA'S BIG CITIES suffer no shortage of adulation for their food scenes. But, we wondered, what about all those towns in between? Wasn't it time they got their share of praise as well? Narrowing our list to our five favorite places wasn't easy, but we had certain criteria. We searched for geographically diverse communities of

fewer than 100,000 people. We sought places that had a thriving food culture—towns with locally supported markets, great restaurants of both the white-tablecloth and the roadside variety, and passionate producers. The result, we hope, will have you mapping out your next road trip accordingly. (See THE PANTRY, page 102, for more information.)

APALACHICOLA, FLORIDA Down on the coastline of the Florida Panhandle, just past the houses with rusting tin roofs and the boiled-peanut stands along Highway 98, lies the old-time oyster town of Apalachicola. This waterside hamlet—known in the local argot as “Apalach”—has a lot to offer the food tourist. Grab breakfast at the 60-year-old **Red Top Café**, where early risers dive into plates of creamy grits, flaky biscuits, spicy concave disks of sausage, and fried eggs. Across the street is **Seafood-2-Go Retail Market, Inc.**, where 90 percent of the seafood that owners Dot-

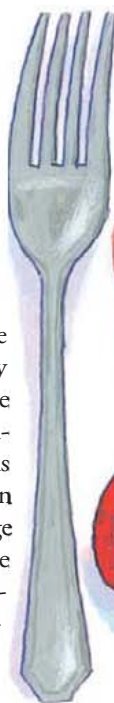
tie and Tracy Evans sell is locally caught, including yellowedge grouper, which Tracy calls “the best fish that swims”. Down the road is the **Piggly Wiggly** supermarket, lovingly referred to as “The Pig”. There's a palpable feeling of community here: owner Lee McLemore stocks the store with a surprisingly large wine selection, police chief Andy Williams moonlights in the prepared-foods section and barbecues in the parking lot, and George Watkins personally fills the shelves with his superb tupelo honey. For the fanciest dinner in town, try the

new **Avenue Sea**, at the Gibson Inn. Old-timers stay away—it's known as a place where “they cook things we've never heard of”—but they don't know what they're missing. Chef-owners David and Ry-
anne Carrier (alums of the French Laundry and Chicago's Blackbird, respectively) offer a dégustation menu that one evening included bay flounder roasted on the bone and served with sweet-tart orange slices, olives, and roasted garlic. For a fish house with a neighborly feel, stop in at **Papa Joe's Oyster Bar & Grill**, where the waitresses often ask, “Whatcha want, hoss?” when taking your order. Take your pick from the trench of

oysters buried in ice at the bar, or opt for a basket of fried grouper and hush puppies. A customer on a recent night quickly devoured two dozen oysters and blurted out, “I put a hurtin' on 'em.” Apalach invites you to do the same. —*Todd Coleman*

ASHLAND, OREGON Ask any denizen of Ashland, an arid Oregon enclave about 15 miles north of the California border, where to eat, and he or she might well respond by asking whether you've seen the current production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Ashland is home

to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and once a local has learned which plays you'll be attending, the next thing he'll ask is whether you'll be dining before the show or after. Indeed, Main Street (and its tributaries) has become a veritable restaurant row, lined with establishments whose kitchens showcase local seasonal ingredients from California's farmland, Oregon's fertile pastures, and the Pacific Ocean. One of the row's early pioneers was David Taub, co-owner of the intimate traditional French restaurant **Chateaulin**, which opened in 1973 and still serves kir royales at the polished oak bar and crêpes au confit de caneton in the



FARE

chandelier-hung dining room. At **Amuse**, the menu is undeniably more Pacific Northwestern, as evidenced by the dungeness crab cakes accompanied by shaved daikon or the black truffle–roasted hen with tender steamed lacinato kale. Oregonians love to complain about Californians' fleeing north, but no one's complaining about former Golden Staters Vernon and Charlene Rollins, owners of **New Sammy's Cowboy Bistro**, in Talent, about half a dozen miles northwest of Ashland. After leaving behind their New Boonville Hotel, in the Anderson Valley, they opened a place here in a dilapidated former gas station. Inside you'll be treated to charmingly eclectic, rustic fare that ranges from grilled poussin to braised buffalo tenderloin—and Vernon's wine list is nearly 3,000 bottles strong. The list over at **Winchester Inn Restaurant and Wine Bar** is much smaller, but it's just as well curated, with an emphasis on selections from Oregon's Willamette, Rogue, and Applegate valleys. **Allyson's of Ashland**—a cooking school, cookware shop, wine store, and charcuterie, cheese, and sandwich counter—provides home cooks and curious culinarians with all the tools and ingredients they'll need to prepare a meal on those evenings when even Roxane can't tempt them to the theater. —*Camas Davis*

BURLINGTON, VERMONT Alongside Lake Champlain, Burlington—home to the University of Vermont and long a mecca



for skiers, aging hippies, and old-fashioned conservatives—is a place where locally produced ingredients are served everywhere, from fine-dining establishments to mom-and-pop diners. You can also catch up with growers and producers on Saturdays at the **Burlington Farmers Market**, in City Hall Park. While you're there,

talk with Willow Smart, owner of **Willow Hill Farm**, about her Blue Moon cheese, a sheep's milk blue cheese aged in a cave in the Green Mountain foothills. At **City Market**, a full-service supermarket that is run by one of the first organic food co-ops in the country, you'll find bread from **Red Hen Baking Company**, which makes daily deliveries of its authentic baguettes and pain au levain. The Queen City may seem like an odd place for an innovative Chinese restaurant, yet at **A Single Pebble**, chef Steve Borgart makes popular items like mock eel, a dish of crisped braised shiitake mushrooms made to resemble that creature. At **Bistro Sauce**, located in the adjacent village of Shelburne, you'll find a favorite spring dish called VT Native's garden tart—a phyllo dough shell filled with wild greens, including nettles, cattail shoots, and ramps hunted down by foraging stars Nova Kim and Les Hook. One of the owners, Emily Iliff, is a graduate of the nearby New England Culinary Institute. Ask the locals where to have breakfast, and they'll probably say **Sneakers Bistro & Café**, located in a storefront in the old mill town of Winooski, five minutes from downtown Burlington. The line out the door begins to form at nine in the morning, but you'll know the wait was worth it when you dig into a huge stack of fluffy golden pancakes dripping with Vermont maple syrup and butter or the house favorite, eggs benedict. Fresh? Absolutely! —*Bronwyn Dunne*

CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA Chapel Hill's proximity to both mountains and sea gives it a climate perfect for growing many things, and North Carolina has a long tradition of hog farming. For a taste of what that all adds up to,



visit the **Chapel Hill-Carrboro Farmer's Market** (open Saturdays from March

to Christmas); among our favorite vendors are the **Chapel Hill Creamery** (the farmers' cheese and the fresh mozzarella are both wonderful), **Eco Farm** (yes, those are North Carolina–grown fava beans), and **Elysian Fields Farm** (go for the bratwurst made from the meat of naturally fed pigs). An even more obviously local delicacy comes from **Allen & Son B-Q**, possibly the best place on Earth for sampling authentic eastern Carolina–style barbecue. The pork shoulder is cooked over hickory, chopped to bite size, and doused with a vinegar sauce. Be sure to order a side of giant crunchy onion rings and the cherry cobbler with homemade vanilla ice cream. In the way of other legends, there's **Crook's Corner**, a quirky Southern restaurant made famous by the late chef and cookbook author Bill Neal and run with equal panache by his successor Bill Smith. Some of Neal's dishes are still on the menu (the shrimp 'n' grits, made with sautéed mushrooms and bacon), but Smith's own staples—like green Tabasco-roasted chicken and fried catfish fingers—are just as much fun. The food across the street at **Lantern** restaurant demonstrates chef Andrea Reusing's ambitious marriage of North Carolina ingredients with Asian flavors, and she pulls it off beautifully; that means dishes like egg drop soup with North Carolina blue crab and local peas and braised Chatham County rabbit with ginger and house-cured ham. As evidence that North Carolina has one of the nation's fastest-growing immigrant Mexican populations, **Fiesta Grill**, located on the outskirts of town, turns out Mexican standards, including homemade tortilla chips and mouthwatering tostadas de ceviche on weekends, that will make you forget you're north of the border. —*Kelly Alexander*

LAWRENCE, KANSAS Lawrence is a college town, so it's not surprising to find a brewery on downtown's main drag, Massachusetts Street. But the **Free State Brewing Co.** is more than just a dive for University



of Kansas fraternity brothers. Free State proprietor Chuck Magerl serves several small-batch beers on tap, including the intensely hoppy Copperhead Pale Ale and the sweet and mellow Wheat State Golden. There's also a menu prominently featuring regional ingredients, among them braised sausages from Krizman's House of Sausage in Kansas City, Kansas, flautas containing chicken raised by a local Mennonite family, and sandwiches on bread from Lawrence's own **WheatFields Bakery**. On Saturday mornings, families and carb-loading cyclists swarm the WheatFields café for lattes and loaves of naturally leavened bread made from organic Kansas-milled flour. At **Pachamama's**, chef Ken Baker's menu of "world cuisine" changes monthly and might include grilled beef filet (from a ranch in southern Kansas) served with pan-roasted oyster and shiitake mushrooms from nearby Wakarusa Valley Farms or a mozzarella–eggplant roulade with lavender-roasted tomatoes from Pendleton's Farm, just east of town. Another Lawrence favorite is **Tortas Jalesco**, formerly a taquería located in a Phillips 66 gas station but now in a real restaurant space that serves up the popular tortas—long rolls packed with slow-roasted pork or other fillings topped with diced tomatoes, cilantro, and guacamole. Amy Saunders of **Amy's Meats** sells her hormone-free beef and pork products (from grass-fed animals raised by her husband on lands outside of town) at the popular **Downtown Lawrence Farmers' Market**. You may even see some fraternity brothers there. —*Sarah Breckenridge*





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KITCHENWISE



Hollywood High

This Los Angeles kitchen is gorgeously efficient

BY KATHLEEN BRENNAN PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICK RICKMAN

JOHN PLESHETTE, a Los Angeles-based actor (he played the character Richard Avery on the television series *Knots Landing*), is passionate about food and cooking. He makes stocks from scratch, prepares all of the family's meals, and sends recipes weekly to more than 150 family members and friends. The "John Pleshette's Meal of the Week" e-mails, complete with color photographs, have included recipes for such dishes as savory green garlic risotto, oxtail stew, and roast

chicken with onions and endives. John's wife, Lynn, a literary agent, is reputed to be one of the best nonprofessional bakers in the city. When the couple entertain, guests are often treated to her culinary endeavors, including moist ricotta cheesecake and airy lemon soufflé tart.

The Pleshettes bought their three-story Spanish-style house, set high in the Hollywood Hills with a view out to the ocean, in 1976. The kitchen, which featured linoleum floors, standard-issue cabinets that ran

KITCHENWISE

up to the ceiling, and a small enamel sink, was in pretty good shape. The only changes the pair made initially were to tear down a wall at the far end of the room that set off a breakfast nook and to install French doors in the exterior wall beyond the nook, providing access from the kitchen to a scenic canopied terrace.

Around ten years ago, however, the couple decided it was time to redo the rest of the kitchen. John assumed the role of designer. As a cook who swears by efficiency, he spent a lot of time planning where everything—from appliances to measuring spoons—would go. “Almost all the decisions I made were practical,” he says. “When I cook, I like

things to be within easy reach.” He also believes in keeping frequently used items out in the open: “Kitchen equipment is attractive; I don’t understand hiding it.” For those reasons, he kept the functional U-shaped layout of the old kitchen and constructed a worktable, which he set between the sink and the cooktop. It’s not as large as a traditional island, but with a shelf underneath, a built-in knife holder, and a maple surface that one can cut on directly, it’s just as useful. Located above the table are some of John’s favorite pots and pans, suspended from a sturdy rack, which a local metalsmith assembled from two crossbars and four stainless-steel brackets.

Under the cooktop are deep shelves that slide out completely to allow easy access to the equipment in the back. Similarly, to the left are a series of open-fronted vertical dividers that hold baking pans, cooling racks, and the like. Throughout the kitchen, John opted to incorporate more drawers than cabinets; he finds the

former more convenient. He also laid down an oak floor because he felt it would be easier on the feet than tile.

John wanted to ensure that he and Lynn could work in the kitchen simultaneously. To ease traffic congestion, he placed a baking station, stocked with all of Lynn’s cooking paraphernalia, between the sink and the refrigerator.

The one change in the room that was more aesthetic than utilitarian was the coving of the ceiling. “It wasn’t necessary,” John admits, “but it gives the room a nice feel.” He then put three-and-a-half-watt xenon strip lights in the soffits; their glow bounces off the ceiling and gives off a “very pretty, warm light at night”—and makes an attractive room even more so. (For more information, see *THE PANTRY*, page 102.)

Would you like to share your own kitchen design ideas with other SAVEUR readers? Send us photos of your kitchen, both overall and in detail, along with your name, address, and a few lines telling us what’s special about it. Please note that submissions cannot be acknowledged or returned. Our address: Kitchenwise, SAVEUR, 304 Park Avenue South, 8th Floor, New York, NY 10010.



2



3



4



5



1

1. Attractive Investment John likes to use these copper pots not only for cooking but also to serve dishes in. They’re as pleasing to look at as they are to cook with, he says.

2. Baker’s Secret This corner of the kitchen, dedicated to baking, houses everything from flour and sugar in the pullout bins to measuring cups and spoons on the tool bar, bowls in the drawers, and a standing mixer on the counter.

3. Custom Fit To the left of the cooktop, running down the hall to John’s office, are several wooden storage units. John designed them to meet his specific needs. The one closest to the cooktop contains spices, oils, and various condiments, while the one featured here holds his favorite cookbooks, platters, and bottles of wine.

4. Morning Squeeze John customized the interiors of most of the drawers and cabinets in the kitchen. He stores oranges and onions in this drawer, which has been equipped with holes to keep the produce fresher longer. (He uses the oranges for making freshly squeezed juice.)

5. Cook, Watch, and Listen A fan of television and of jazz and classical music, John installed a mini home entertainment center in the kitchen. He covered the casing of the double ovens with the same white subway tile used on the walls to create a more cohesive look.



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CELLAR


Mistress of the Dark

Powerful aglianico softens into elegance with age

BY JOHN WINTHROP HAEGER

THINK OF BRAWNY, dark, powerful wines that are also fresh and elegant; wines that combine smoke and bitter chocolate with sweet herbal flavors when young, then develop surprising delicacy and haunting fragrance with ten or 20 years of age; wines that remind many tasters of great nebbiolo and are sometimes dubbed “the barolos of the south”—but that cost a fraction of what barolo does. These are the wines made from aglianico, a grape variety often said to be a pre-Roman import from Greece, though it is more likely just another example of Italy’s rich heritage of indigenous varieties.

According to Piero Mastroberardino, whose family is generally credited with reviving aglianico after World War II, the first “modern” aglianico was made at his family’s estate near Avellino, in Campania, about 40 miles inland from Naples, in 1968. Now the grape seems to be in the midst of a whirlwind of viticultural activity all over its home turf, from the Mediterranean coast north of Naples to the Gulf of Taranto, in the arch of Italy’s boot. Doctors, photographers, architects, and the sons and daughters of local farmers, buttressed with advice from luminary consulting winemakers like Riccardo Cotarella, have attracted international attention

with a flurry of new wines. The sweet spots are Irpinia and Taburno—two upland areas in the western foothills of the Apennines—and the slopes of Monte Vulture in Basilicata, where high altitudes, cold nights, and volcanic soils produce especially intense wines that sometimes display ferrous flavors reminiscent of those in pomerols. Other successful—and sometimes more approachable—aglianico also comes from warmer coastal areas along the Mediterranean south of Salerno. Virtually all young aglianico is forbiddingly tannic, though. Even at a tender age, it may prove a tasty match for spicy salumi, gamy ragù, or juicy beef dishes, but it will provide greater satisfaction if it’s aged in the bottle for a decade or more. 



Tasting Notes

The aglianico-based wines from Campania and Basilicata that are now available in the United States vary greatly in price. We found wines to like at all levels. See THE PANTRY, page 102, for sources.

DE CONCILIIS PAESTUM ZERO 2003 (\$100). Incense, bay laurel, dates, and dried figs on the nose; then ripe, rich, sweet, velvety, and almost soft on the midpalate, with an explosion of tannin at the finish.

ELENA FUCCI DEL VULTURE TITOLO 2003 (\$49). Complex nose of fruit, nuts, and marzipan; then elegant, inky, and ferrous in the mouth, with some bitter chocolate and black pepper; nicely structured wine that retains both intensity and fruit through the midpalate.

FEUDI DI SAN GREGORIO DEL VULTURE VIGNE DI MEZZO EFESTO 2002 (\$40). Unusual nose of walnuts, butter, and marzipan; sweet black fruit and India ink in the mouth; intense, mouth-coating, and long.

FEUDI DI SAN GREGORIO IRPINIA RUBRATO 2003 (\$19). Opaque, deep, and black-red in color, with aromas of ripe blackberries, earth, and tobacco; a lean, inky integration of black cherry and mineral flavors; and a long midpalate with well-wrapped tannins.

MACARICO DEL VULTURE 2003 (\$54). Dark, black-ruby wine, with flavors of charcuterie, hard spices, cherry, and chocolate following a minty nose; the tannins are soft and nicely coated, and the wine finishes long.

MASTROBERARDINO IRPINIA NATURALIS HISTORIA 2000 (\$65). A blend of aglianico and piederrosso, another southern Italian variety. Deep garnet in color, with aromas of tobacco, hickory, and iodine; intense flavors of black cherry, blackberry, and dark chocolate; ferrous and tannic at the end.

MASTROBERARDINO TAURASI RADICI 2000 (\$41). A pretty, medium-dark wine with savory, balsamic, and intermittently medicinal aromatics, followed by slightly citrus-tinged red fruit on the palate; a benchmark wine.

MOLETTIERI TAURASI VIGNA CINQUE QUERCE 2000 (\$45). Dark and opaque, with aromas of Mercurochrome, earth, smoke, barrel char, and black pepper; still hard despite three years in barrel; very tannic and long.

MUSTILLI SANT'AGATA DEI GOTI CESCO DI NECE 2001 (\$28). Medium-dark wine with highlights of brick and tile; redolent of dried apricots, stone fruit peelings, and hazelnut, with red and exotic fruit flavors plus pepper in the mouth; lovely, accessible, medium-weight aglianico.

PATERNOSTER DEL VULTURE DON ANSELMO 2000 (\$62). Interesting barrel-derived aromas of spearmint and pomegranate followed by sweet black fruit that is first rich, then creamy, and finally grippy and chewy; a huge wine built for the future.

PATERNOSTER DEL VULTURE SYNTHESI 2002 (\$22). Orange peel and mint in the nose; sweet, bright, round, and intense in the mouth, with black fruit and chocolate flavors; then tannic, ferrous, and mineral.

TERRE DEGLI SVEVI DEL VULTURE RE MANFREDI 2001 (\$27). Deep, brick red color; aromas of black licorice and cherry with citrus peel highlights; a sweet attack, then bright and warmly spicy, with more cherry and tobacco; a peppery finish with hefty tannin. —J.W.H.



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ESSAY

Dilbert's Kitchen

Has TV chef Gordon Ramsay gone out of control?

BY COLMAN ANDREWS

GORDON RAMSAY, the onetime professional soccer player turned Michelin three-star chef, may or may not be a jerk, but he plays one on TV. The Fox network “reality” show that he hosts, *Hell's Kitchen*, which is based on a 2004–2005 British TV series of the same name that also starred Ramsay, records the goings-on at (according to the show's website) “a culinary boot camp...overseen by world-renowned but terrifying Head Chef Gordon Ramsay”.

The show, it is promised, “will serve helpings of terror, tears, tantrums and triumphs”. Translated, that means that we see (and hear) Ramsay ranting and raving and cussing his way around a restaurant kitchen while two six-person crews of underexperienced cooks, in the course of competing for the title of executive chef at a new restaurant opening in Las Vegas, cringe and tremble and occasionally talk back while they try not to slice off a fingertip or, worse, break the emulsion.

Okay, so, granted that terror, tears, tantrums, and triumphs make good drama on TV (and elsewhere, too)—but remind me what they have to do with making good food. Does panic inspire the saucier to greater delicacy? Does a cowering pastry chef make lighter *pâte feuilletée* than one just normally hunched over the marble slab? Is this what the chef's art is really all about?

Watching *Hell's Kitchen*, one can't help remembering that old joke whose punch line, in part, proposes that in Hades itself the policemen would be German and the chefs English—except that Ramsay is a Scot, which probably makes the barb even more pointed.

Nobody denies that he can cook, however. When the 39-year-old Glaswegian—who traded his soccer career for positions in the kitchens of Albert Roux at Le Gavroche in London and then Joël Robuchon in Paris, earned three stars at his own restaurant back in London in 2001, and today has nine eater-

ies in the British capital plus one each in Dubai and Tokyo and one scheduled to open this fall in New York City—tossed the restaurant critic A. A. Gill out of his flagship establishment, Gill was moved to describe Ramsay as “a wonderful chef, just a really second-rate human being”.

I've never met Ramsay or seen him in live action, so I have no idea how accurate the second part of Gill's characterization may be. What I do know is that a chef who yells and swears and

an extreme disservice. Raymond Blanc, the outspoken chef-proprietor of the two-star Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, in Oxfordshire, while not mentioning anybody by name, presumably had Ramsay partly in mind last spring when he denounced TV shows featuring abusive chefs. “We have eight million morons watching these programs,” he said. “The brains of the British have gone soft.” When his remarks subsequently ignited a firestorm of reaction, he refused to back




Chef Gordon Ramsay, above left, chews out a contestant in the second season of *Hell's Kitchen*.

makes his subordinates wince isn't really in control; he's a bad manager, a joke of a boss—like that guy with the black-hair horns in “Dilbert”.

Of course *Hell's Kitchen* is just showbiz. I doubt that Ramsay storms around the kitchens of his real-life restaurants screaming commands at tremulous employees. By leading gullible viewers to think that he does, though, I'm afraid he renders the cause of good food

down, adding, “These shows have done such irreparable damage to the industry.”

Restaurant cooking is a collaborative art, requiring the synchronized contributions of skilled workers under the command of a strong leader. Sure, there's pressure, but it's not a cutthroat competition. Passion for cooking is an admirable trait, but it doesn't—and indeed shouldn't—have to be expressed at the top of one's voice. 



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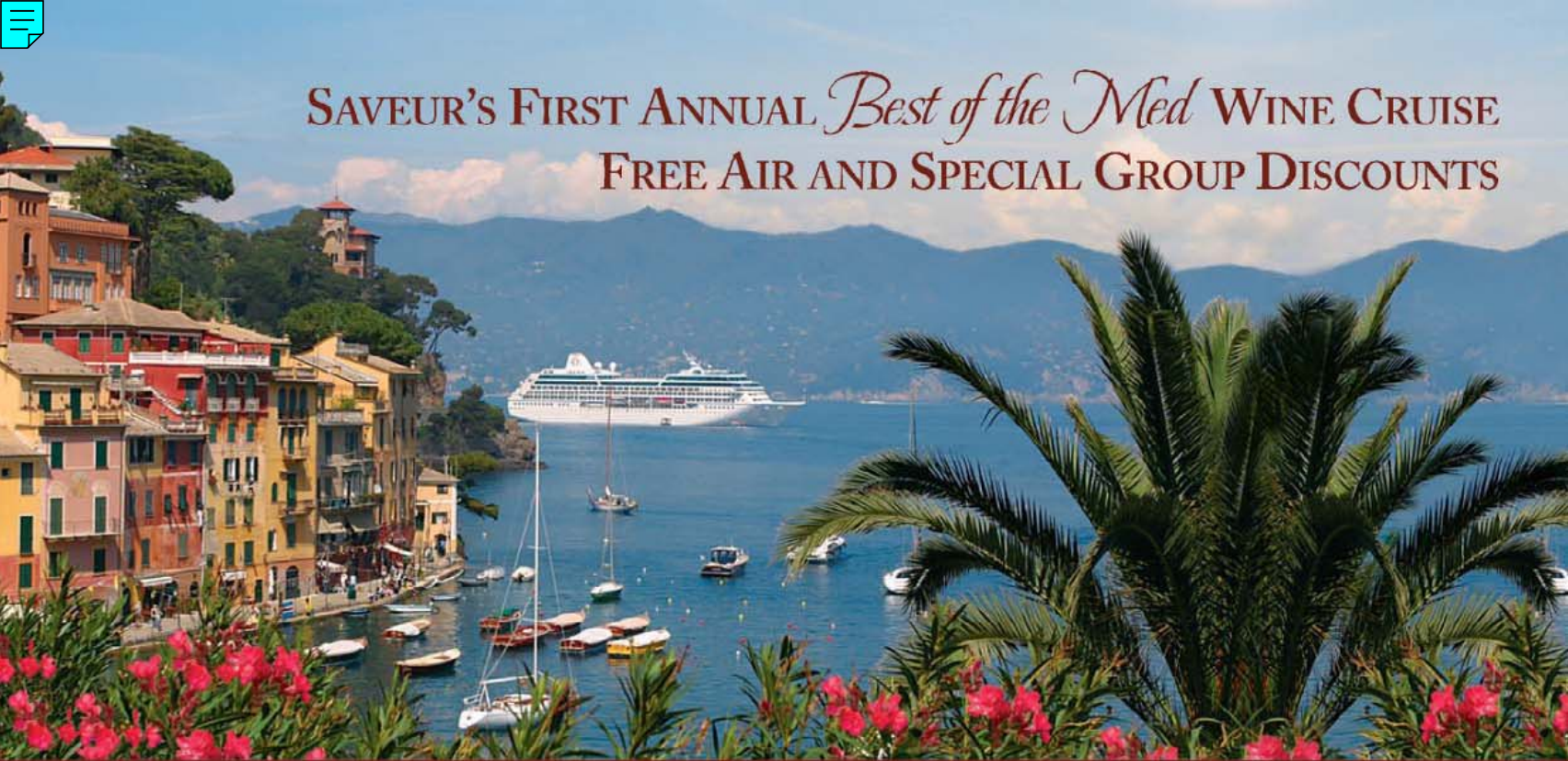


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MEMORIES

Honeymoon in Yerevan

To become one of the family, a newlywed must first partake of an Armenian feast

BY LITTY MATHEW

The author, below center, and her husband, Melkon Khosrovian, below right, at their wedding in California.

IT WAS A SUNDAY afternoon in June, four years ago, when I sat down to lunch with my husband's extended family. In honor of our marriage, a few days earlier in California, and our arrival in Armenia to celebrate our honeymoon, they had filled a long dining table to overflowing with cold meza (appetizers). Twelve mismatched chairs, their backs turned to the drab beige wallpaper, were placed around the table in the dim room

that served as parlor, dining room, and extra bedroom for my husband's aunt Serpouhi and her family. Their red stone apartment building on Boulevard Mashtots—a central thoroughfare in Yerevan, Armenia's capital—reminded me of an old general in a shabby uniform. It had once been grand but was now perpetually under repair, the symbols of Soviet pride like daily running water and affordable heat having long since disappeared.

"Eat and shut up," my husband's redheaded aunt Serpouhi said in a raspy voice, placing in front of me a chipped enamel pot of tender beef stewed with onions, tomatoes, and fried potatoes. My mouth watered from the aroma of the slow-cooked meat, but my palms began to sweat at Serpouhi's harsh words. In her 70s, she is my mother-in-law's oldest sister. It had taken a while for Melkon's parents to adjust to the idea of a non-Armenian daughter-in-law, and I worried that the rest of his family would have a harder time.

They spoke in insistent, open-voweled words. It sounded as if they were arguing; I've since come to realize that it was just the excited nature of their language. Melkon leaned over to assure me that "eat and shut up" was the translation of *ker u sus*, the traditional name of the hearty stew before me. I didn't understand much Armenian, but I understand food.

Besides the stew on the table, there were plastic bowls—placed in strategic corners to hide the spots where the tablecloth was worn—filled with roasted eggplant and zucchini dips. There were lengths of flat lavash, saucers of home-cured olives, sliced basturma (a meat cured with cumin and garlic), rounds of sheep's milk cheese, and a plate of basil, cilantro, dill, green onions, and tarragon—the herbs that Armenians commonly serve as condiments. A large pitcher of water sat in the middle of the spread. In Yerevan, tap water (when available) is like Evian, coming from unspoiled mountain streams, and is so clear that I could see dust settling on its surface. Home-brewed vodka decanted into Fanta bottles and Armenian brandy were passed around the table.

"You have to try our brandy," Melkon insisted between

LITTY MATHEW, a Los Angeles-based vodka maker, also writes for the Los Angeles Times and Travel and Leisure.



MEMORIES



Above, left to right, Melkon and the author enjoying a honeymoon meal with his family in Yerevan; sliced basturma.



bites. “They say Winston Churchill preferred Armenian brandy to the French stuff.”

No one had forced Melkon and me to honeymoon here, in this place still desperately trying to redefine itself after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. A country about the size of Maryland, surrounded by Azerbaijan, Turkey, Georgia, and Iran, Armenia, which had suffered under Soviet rule, was suffering in a different way since the Soviet withdrawal. The streets were potholed; the public gardens were unkempt, their trees cut down for winter fuel; officials on every level held out their hands for bribes. My husband’s father cannot bear to see his beloved homeland in this condition, and so he refuses to return.

But I wanted to know everything about Melkon: the small village outside the city where he grew up before moving with his parents and sister to Rhode Island in 1980 in search of economic opportunity; the once lush park around the opera house where he and his family would stroll on weekends; the cavernous food market where they used to buy, he remembered, floral-scented tomatoes. I wanted to see snowcapped Mount Ararat, the supposed resting place of Noah’s Ark and a beloved icon for every Armenian—though it is geographically in Turkey, an enemy to Armenia since the turn of the 20th century, when the Turkish government began a systematic genocide of the Armenian population.

Aunt Serpouhi and her daughter-in-law, Rouzan, a brunette with a warm smile, brought dish after dish from the confines of the small kitchen. A salad of tomato and cucumber, flavored with onion, parsley, and lemon, tasted to me like the sun. Next came smoky pork kebabs that Aunt Serpouhi slipped off the skewers and onto my plate, sliced marinated white mushrooms mixed with minced

garlic and dill, and tender quickly boiled green beans from the Ararat valley dressed with garlic and olive oil. A platter piled high with moist stuffed grape leaves brought applause from the table. After a time, I couldn’t eat any more, but to refuse, Melkon whispered to me, was out of the question. A feast like this cost more than a family member’s monthly salary.

“Try the pickled okra,” urged Rouzan. “I put them up myself.” I took a deep breath, imagining a space in some remote corner of my stomach, and reached for one. It was crisp and briny. I ate three.

WE HAD BEEN EATING for almost three hours when Aunt Serpouhi acquiesced to a break. The younger cousins cleared the table and then danced to a song on the radio. I wandered to the front balcony, overlooking the street below, and searched for Mount Ararat. Although it can be seen from almost anywhere in Yerevan, it eluded me. I did see the city’s central square and the opera house and the façade of a Mexican restaurant called Cactus, run by an Indian and reportedly a hot spot for those whose wallets were thick with U.S. dollars.

Ani, Aunt Serpouhi’s granddaughter, brought out a cool glass of tahn, a yogurt drink with salt and dried mint, and a plate of roasted almonds to tide me over until dessert. She stayed to practice her English, while Melkon played backgammon with Rouzan’s chain-smoking husband, Ashot.

“Do you know Armenia celebrated 1,700 years of Christianity last year?” Ani asked conversationally. You couldn’t miss it if you tried, I thought. Banners commemorating the anniversary still festooned the major streets. I thought about Armenian Christianity the day we visited the ruins of Erebuni, a stronghold of the powerful kingdom of Urartu,



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moment
“That was the perfect ~~mai-tai~~.”

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MEMORIES

which flourished from 900 to 600 B.C. There, a stone tablet inscribed with ancient symbols harked back to a time much earlier than Christianity, when Armenians first formed their culture. You could feel the presence of the region's vast history in the everyday, in the 500-year-old songs still sung on the radio, in the naming of children after gods and goddesses, and in the aromatic foods that came from every kitchen.

After finishing my drink, I was escorted back to the table, which was now set with porcelain demitasse cups. We sat down to juicy apricots as big as apples, pumpkin preserves, plump home-dried raisins, and delicate phyllo dough layered with rose water–infused pastry cream, a specialty of Aunt Serpouhi's that reflects the family's roots in Lebanon, where they lived for a time during and after the genocide. Rouzan poured thick Armenian coffee flavored with cardamom. Ashot passed around homemade 100-proof mulberry vodka.

We slipped into silence, heavy with unspoken conversation. Aunt Serpouhi reached over and took my empty coffee cup. I worried that she was going to pour seconds. Instead,

she turned the contents of the cup into the saucer and read my fate in the leftover grounds. She placed my fingers in her hands and told me that my future held much happiness and many good meals. I smiled, thinking that they couldn't get much better than the one I had just had. ✨

THE PANTRY, page 102: A source for rose water.

RECIPE

Rose Napoleons

MAKES 1 DOZEN

This delicate pastry (left) is a favorite of Litty Mathew's husband's aunt Serpouhi. If you're short on baking sheets, you may bake the phyllo dough in two batches.

3 egg yolks
 1/4 cup granulated sugar
 1 tbsp. flour
 1 tbsp. cornstarch
 1 1/4 cups milk
 1 1/2 tsp. rose water (see page 102)
 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
 12 12" x 17" sheets frozen phyllo dough, thawed
 6 tbsp. butter, melted
 2 tbsp. confectioners' sugar
 2 tbsp. shelled pistachios, finely chopped

1. Whisk egg yolks and sugar in a medium bowl until pale and frothy. Sift flour and cornstarch into egg mixture; whisk to combine. Put milk into a small pot and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Pour milk into egg mixture in a slow, steady stream while whisking vigorously. Transfer egg-milk mixture to the pot and cook over medium-low heat, whisking constantly, to make a thick custard, 5–6 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in rose water and vanilla. Transfer mixture to a bowl; let cool over an ice bath. Cover surface with plastic wrap; refrigerate until ready to use.

2. Preheat oven to 350°. Put 1 sheet of phyllo on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet, brush with some of the butter, and top with a second sheet of phyllo. Butter top, then repeat process to make 6 layers in all. Repeat process on a second baking sheet with remaining phyllo and butter. Top each stack with a sheet of parchment paper, followed by a baking sheet to weight them down. Bake until light golden brown, 25–30 minutes. Let cool completely (with baking sheets on top). Using a sharp knife, cut each stack into thirty 2" x 2" squares. Reserve phyllo scraps.

3. To assemble: Place 1 phyllo square on a platter, dollop with a generous teaspoon pastry cream, and top with a phyllo square. Continue building layers until you have 5 layers of phyllo and 4 layers of pastry cream in all. Repeat with remaining phyllo and pastry cream to make 12 napoleons in all. Dust napoleons with confectioners' sugar, sprinkle with pistachios, and crumble some of the reserved phyllo scraps over the top. Serve immediately.





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SOURCE

Fruits of the Forest

Malcolm Clark's mushrooms are no ordinary fungi

BY KATHLEEN BRENNAN

ORIGINALLY, MALCOLM CLARK'S interest in mushrooms was purely scientific. A British-born biologist, Clark traveled in the early 1970s to Japan, where he met Tsuneto Yoshii, a renowned mycologist exploring the medicinal uses of fungi. The experience opened Clark's eyes to mushrooms, but only as far as their curative properties were concerned. In 1977 he moved to Sonoma County and, with his business partner David Law, formed Gourmet Mushrooms, Inc. The company name notwithstanding, Clark at first grew and marketed mushrooms (specifically, shiitake) solely for therapeutic purposes. He soon realized, however, that for the venture to survive, he would also have to sell mushrooms as food.

Today Gourmet Mushrooms is one of the largest exotic-mushroom producers in the United States, cultivating more than 30 varieties of fungi, including (left foreground, counterclockwise from top) fruity forest namekos, meaty, porcini-like trumpet royales, nutty brown clamshells (known in Japan as honshimeji), rich velvet pioppinis, silky baby oyster clusters, and snow-white alba clamshells. Some of the country's leading chefs have been its clients, among them Thomas Keller, Charlie Trotter, and Wolfgang Puck. Four years ago the company began offering its mushrooms, packed in baskets like the one shown, directly to the public under the name Mycopia. The mushrooms, all grown organically, are shipped within hours of being picked. To someone accustomed to the varieties normally found in supermarkets, the freshness of Clark's fungi and their depth of flavor are astonishing.

Although Gourmet Mushrooms has made its mark chiefly as a source of gustatory pleasure, Clark, now semiretired, still considers himself a man of science above all else. Indeed, this pioneering figure, known to friends and associates as "the Indiana Jones of mushrooms", continues to travel the globe, test tubes in hand, searching for new varieties. "I have a lot of respect for mushrooms," Clark says. "They are survivors, growing in the worst, dark, dank places in the world. Fungi are incredible." A two-pound basket of assorted mushrooms costs \$57.50, and a four-pound basket is \$82.50, including shipping. To order, call 707/823-1743 or visit www.mycopia.com.





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CLASSIC

Vietnamese Fire

This spicy noodle soup is an invigorating brow wiper

BY ANDREA NGUYEN




A STEAMING BOWL of bún bò huế (pronounced boon baw HWAY), the signature noodle soup of Huế, Vietnam's former imperial capital, brings tears to my eyes—and not the sentimental kind. My father, who lived in the city in the 1950s, regularly ate the famously fiery dish—a substantial concoction made with rice noodles and sliced beef and pork—for breakfast, as is traditional; and the dish invigorated him, especially on dreary cold mornings during the long rainy season. Years later, in California, he introduced it to me. From my first slurp of the chile- and lemongrass-laden broth, I was hooked.

Huế's residents are known for their

feisty nature; their city, located in central Vietnam, was once part of the fierce kingdom of Champa, at war with the northern Vietnamese for hundreds of years. Centuries later, from the early 1800s until 1945, Huế was the seat of the Nguyễn dynasty. Despite the relative poverty of the region, palace cooks developed a sophisticated style of court dining for persnickety rulers. Composed of modest ingredients, however, bún bò huế was created not for royalty but rather for the common folk, who were no doubt as energized by the dish as were my father and I.

Most Vietnamese noodle soups tend to be

delicate and usually generate heat only by means of the accompanying condiments, but bún bò huế comes with the heat built in. Chiles are much appreciated in Huế, as is pastelike fermented shrimp sauce, which anchors the broth with its pungent edge and balances the citrusy lemongrass. At the table, you may tweak the flavors with lime, fresh mint, and sliced raw chiles. Some people from other parts of Vietnam also garnish the dish with bean sprouts, shredded lettuce, and fine strips of banana blossom. A purist, though, would advise against such embellishments, arguing that they detract from the soup's essential character. 

RECIPE

Bún Bò Huế

(Huế-Style Spicy Beef and Rice Noodle Soup)

SERVES 8

See page 102 for a source for hard-to-find Vietnamese ingredients.

- 7 tbsp. canola oil
- 3 medium yellow onions, 2 cut into 1" dice, 1 thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp. annatto seeds
- 2 lbs. boneless beef shank (shin), halved crosswise, tendon removed and discarded
- 1 lb. boneless pork leg, from the upper butt portion
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 lbs. beef bones, cut into 2" pieces, boiled for 3 minutes
- 1½ lbs. fresh pork hock, cut into ½" slices (see page 99)
- 3 tbsp. plus 2½ tsp. Vietnamese fish sauce
- 5 trimmed stalks lemongrass, 4 cut into 3" pieces, bruised; 1 minced
- 1 1" chunk Chinese yellow rock sugar
- 3 tbsp. dried chile flakes
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. granulated sugar
- 2 tbsp. fine shrimp sauce
- 2 14-oz. packages large round bún (Vietnamese rice noodles), boiled, then rinsed with cold water
- ⅓ cup chopped rau răm (Vietnamese coriander)
- 3 scallions, green parts only, trimmed and thinly sliced

1. For the broth: Heat 2 tbsp. oil in a stockpot over medium-high heat. Add diced onions and cook for 2 minutes. Add annatto; cook until onions are yellow, 4–5 minutes. Season beef and pork leg with salt and pepper; push onions to side; add beef and pork. Sear meat for 4–5 minutes; add bones, hocks, and 5 quarts water. Bring to a boil; skim off and discard any scum. Add 3 tbsp. fish sauce, bruised lemongrass, and rock sugar; reduce heat and simmer for 1 hour. Transfer pork leg and hocks to a bowl of cold water; let soak for 10 minutes. Simmer broth for 1 hour more. Repeat soaking and draining with shank. Chill leg, hocks, and shank in refrigerator. Skim fat from broth; strain through a fine sieve.

2. Combine remaining oil, chile flakes, garlic, and minced lemongrass in a small pot over medium-low heat; gently simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in remaining fish sauce and granulated sugar. Set chile mixture aside.

3. Bring broth to a boil in a large pot. In a bowl, stir together 1 cup of broth with shrimp sauce; pour into pot through a fine sieve and stir in 1½ tbsp. of chile mixture. Season to taste with salt. Divide noodles between 8 bowls. Cut beef and pork across the grain into ⅛"-thick slices; top each bowl with slices, followed by sliced onions, rau răm, and scallions. Add hocks to broth; bring to a boil. Ladle 2 cups hot broth with some hock into each bowl. Serve with remaining chile mixture, mint sprigs, sliced thai chiles, and lime wedges, if you like.

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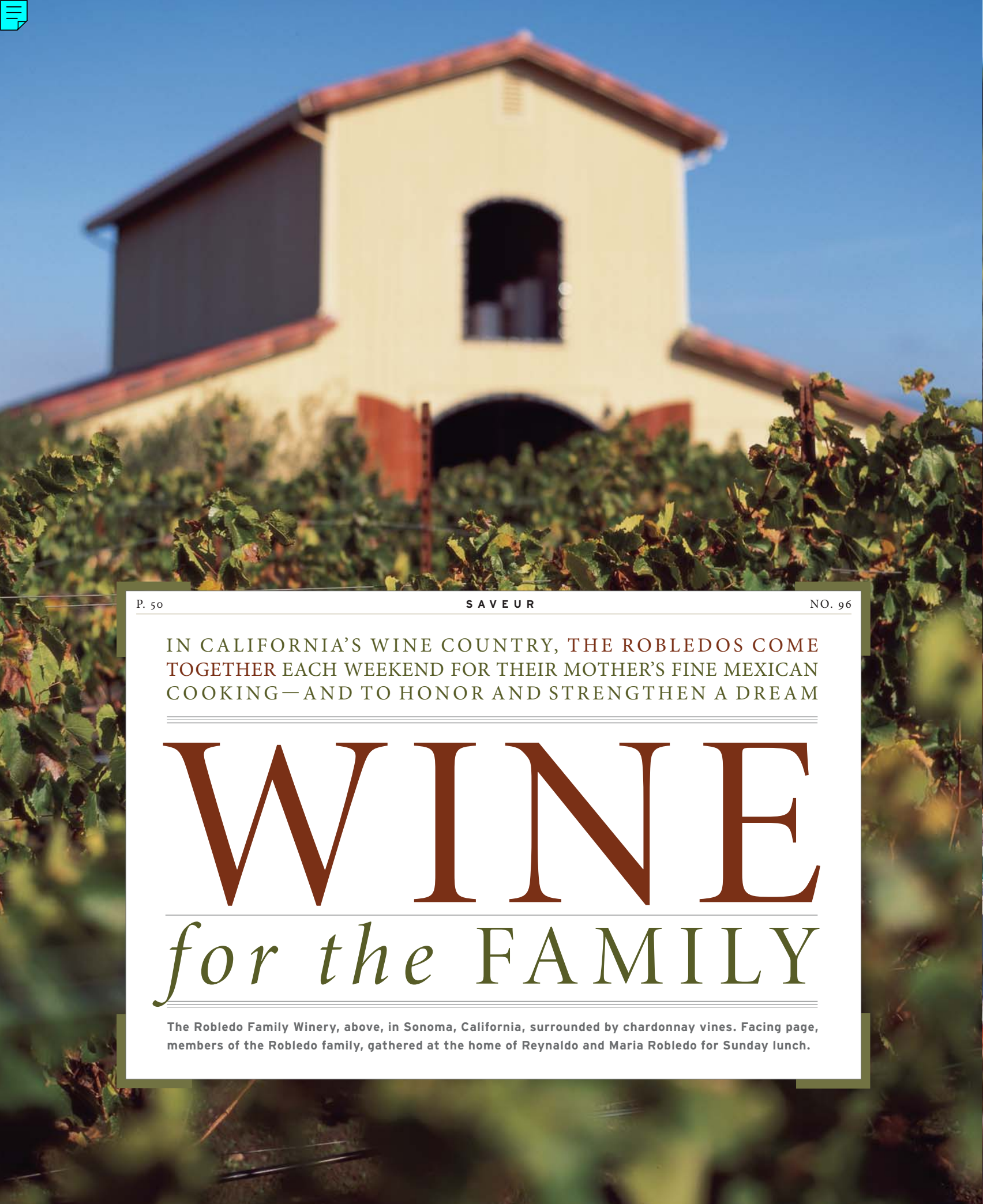


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P. 50

SAVEUR

NO. 96

IN CALIFORNIA'S WINE COUNTRY, THE ROBLEDOS COME TOGETHER EACH WEEKEND FOR THEIR MOTHER'S FINE MEXICAN COOKING—AND TO HONOR AND STRENGTHEN A DREAM

WINE

for the FAMILY

The Robledo Family Winery, above, in Sonoma, California, surrounded by chardonnay vines. Facing page, members of the Robledo family, gathered at the home of Reynaldo and Maria Robledo for Sunday lunch.



MEXICAN-AMERICAN WINERY

BY MARGO TRUE | PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEN FINK

EVERY SUNDAY afternoon, the children of Reynaldo and Maria Robledo gather at their parents' house in Napa for lunch. Maria makes a Mexican feast of giant proportions—spicy pork or chicken posole, homemade tortillas, tostadas, rice, beans, maybe chiles rellenos or a smooth, chocolatey mole, and some fresh salsas—for her nine children, ranging in age from 13 to 34, plus their spouses and her grandchildren. In good weather, they eat outdoors under the branches of a broad, leafy oak tree. The table stretches on and on: there are typically almost 30 people here, laughing and talking in both Spanish and English, passing around sweet-faced babies while toddlers and older kids scoot in and out of the grapevines planted right up to the house. This is the Robledo family, and the business it took Reynaldo 35 years to achieve, Robledo Family Winery, is for them.

As Reynaldo, his wife, and any of his children will tell you, they don't see the American dream as a mirage or a cliché. Three years ago, Reynaldo became the first former migrant vineyard worker in North America to own a winery. (Other Mexican-Americans

have since done the same; see sidebar, page 56.) Reynaldo and some of his relatives came to California from the Mexican state of Michoacán in 1968, when he was 16, with several of his relatives. He started out earning as little as \$1.10 an hour (most of which he sent back to his family in Mexico), living in a transient labor camp near Calistoga, and putting in 14- to 18-hour days pruning vines.

Now he has a vineyard management company with 30 to 45 year-round employees, as well as his winery, whose vineyards cover 220 acres (90 of them on long-term lease) in Sonoma, Napa, and Lake counties. He sells grapes to prominent wineries like Gloria Ferrer, Kendall Jackson, and Benziger and makes 10,000 cases of his own wine, a quantity that has doubled since 2004.

Over the past year, he has begun to release an ambitious array of new bottlings—pinot grigio, pinot blanc, barbera, muscato, and port—as well as the varietals he has already sold: chardonnay, merlot, pinot noir, sauvignon blanc, syrah, cabernet sauvignon. Several of Robledo's wines have won awards. His 2001 Reserve Chardonnay received a double gold medal at the 2004 California State Fair, and his 2003 pinot noir has garnered multiple honors (among them a gold from the 2006 Orange County Fair wine competition).

Satisfying though all this success is to Reynaldo, what pleases him the most is that each of his nine children works for the family businesses. Lorena, the oldest, helps keep the books

for both the vineyard management company and the winery and is married to the company's personable winemaker, Rolando Herrera—also Mexican-American and a former director of winemaking for Paul Hobbs,

RECIPE

Posole Rojo

(Pork and Hominy Stew)

SERVES 8-10

In Michoacán, Maria Robledo's birthplace, posole is typically made with pork broth. The soup always contains hominy, dried corn kernels that have been cooked in an alkaline solution (such as slaked lime) to remove the hull. For a source for hard-to-find Mexican ingredients, see THE PANTRY, page 102.

5 dried cascabel chiles, stemmed and seeded
 4 dried pasilla chiles, stemmed and seeded
 3 dried new mexico chiles, stemmed and seeded
 5 cloves garlic, chopped
 4 15-oz. cans golden hominy, drained and rinsed (about 6 cups)
 1½ lbs. pork neck bones, cut into 2" pieces by your butcher
 1½ lbs. pork leg, cut into 2" pieces by your butcher
 1 lb. pork spareribs, cut into 2" pieces by your butcher
 Salt
 10 radishes, trimmed and thinly sliced
 1 large white onion, roughly chopped
 ½ small head green cabbage, cored and thinly sliced

1. Put chiles into a small pot and cover with water; bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, covered, until soft, about 20 minutes. Drain chiles; transfer to a blender. Add 3½ cups water; purée until smooth. Strain through a medium-mesh strainer into a bowl. Purée garlic and ¼ cup water until smooth. Set chile mixture and garlic purée aside.

2. Put hominy and 9 cups water into a large pot; bring to a boil over high heat. Stir in chile mixture, garlic purée, pork bones, leg, and spareribs, and salt to taste. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, covered, until pork is tender, about 2 hours. Uncover and simmer until pork is very tender, about 2 hours more. Serve posole garnished with radishes, onions, cabbage, and three-chile salsa (see page 55), if you like.

Facing page, Vianna Robledo, Reynaldo's granddaughter, holding a bowl of pork and hominy stew.





MEXICAN-AMERICAN WINERY

known for its fine single-vineyard wines. Vanessa, the other daughter, is the winery president, and although she's not yet 30, she has the grace and confidence of someone much older. The seven sons have all chosen niches for themselves: Rey Jr. is a specialist in vine grafting and in tending the family's 100 planted acres of olive trees; Jenaro is a vineyard manager; Lazaro is the tasting room manager; eager, 13-year-old Emiliano began driving an ATV at age five to scare away grape-eating birds, but harvesting is what he likes the best. "I think he has something inside already," says Reynaldo proudly.

ON A SUNDAY morning in October, Maria stands in front of an enormous stockpot, stirring boiling hominy (dried corn) for the posole (a pork stew) that

RECIPE

Calabaza y Camote

(Candied Squash and Sweet Potatoes)

SERVES 6-8

This hearty mixture of slowly simmered squash and sweet potatoes is bathed in a delicious syrup that is sweetened with the rich Mexican unrefined brown sugar known as piloncillo, which comes in the shape of a cone. For the best results, stir infrequently while cooking, to keep the squash and potatoes intact.

4-5 sweet potatoes (about 3 lbs.), scrubbed, halved lengthwise, and cut into 2" chunks
1 butternut squash (about 2¾ pounds), scrubbed, trimmed, halved, seeded, and cut into 2" chunks
1 lb. Mexican brown sugar (piloncillo, about 2 cones), cut into small pieces (see page 102)

1. Put sweet potatoes and 1 cup water into a large pot, cover, and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, covered, for 20 minutes. Add squash and sugar, stir to combine, and cook, covered, stirring occasionally, until sweet potatoes and squash are soft, 1-1½ hours more.

2. Uncover pot and cook until sweet potatoes and squash are just falling apart and liquid has thickened, about 45 minutes. Transfer sweet potato-squash mixture to serving bowl and let cool to room temperature. Divide between bowls and serve at room temperature.



the family will devour in a few hours. Her roomy kitchen sits at the back of the house into which she and Reynaldo moved nine years ago, a big, two-story place with a red-tiled roof and numerous family portraits decorating the living room. She has the radio down low, but normally, says Vanessa, she cranks it up to full blast and sings along to Mexican folk songs.

"Siempre toma un poco de vino cuando cocino [I always have a little

MARGO TRUE, a former executive editor of *SAVEUR*, is the food editor for *Sunset*, in Northern California.

Above, a dish of calabaza y camote (candied squash and sweet potatoes). Facing page, left, a bottle of the Robledo winery's 2004 Reserve Cabernet; right, three-chile salsa and grilled tomato salsa.

wine when I cook]," says Maria; it helps her find a good wine to match with the food. For this posole, though, she already knows the right wine—it comes from the pinot vines framed in her kitchen window.

Every now and then she turns around to help Jocelyn, Vanessa's little daughter, work the tortilla press, exhorting her, "Fuerte, mi hija! Fuerte! [Press firmly, my daughter! Firmly!]"

MEXICAN-AMERICAN WINERY



Rey Jr.'s wife, Erika, is at the kitchen island, pulling crabmeat from the shell for tostadas. Vanessa blends soaked dried chiles for salsa, sneezing from the fumes. Lorena sits on a stool with her new baby in her arms. Reynaldo is here too, in a handsome black cowboy hat, splitting quail in half with quick thunks of a knife.

When Maria joined Reynaldo in Sonoma in 1972 (they had been sweethearts in Michoacán and married in 1970), she started cooking in earnest, drawing on memories of her mother's hearty, country-style Michoacán food. She cooked not only for her growing family but also

for Reynaldo's cousins and uncles and grandfather, many of whom were living with them in a small house. The Robledos and their children moved frequently to be close to Reynaldo's place of work. Their last house stood on the same spot as the present one.

"I'd always know where to find my mother: in the kitchen," says Vanessa. "That old house! It had two rooms with an extension out the back, no closets, and was about a hundred years old and crumbling. You could practically see through the boards. We'd beg my dad, 'Please buy us a house!' And he'd say, 'Nope, I'm buying more land.'" By



METHOD

Three-Chile Salsa

This dark, almost chocolatey salsa would make a great accompaniment for seared steak or grilled pork chops. Take 10 dried cascabel, 10 árbol, and 6 pulla chiles (see page 102) and tear them into large pieces, discarding stems (discard seeds for a milder salsa, if desired). Heat $\frac{1}{4}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add 6 chopped cloves garlic and cook, stirring constantly, until light golden, about 1 minute. Using a slotted spoon, transfer garlic to a blender, leaving the oil in the skillet. Add chiles with their seeds (if using) to skillet and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant and slightly darkened, about 3 minutes. Put chiles and oil, 1 tbsp. cider vinegar, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water, and salt to taste into the blender and purée until very smooth, about 3 minutes. Serve this salsa with pork and hominy stew (see page 52), if you like. Makes about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup.

Grilled Tomato Salsa

Grilling the tomatoes and chiles imparts a lovely, smoky char to this salsa. Preheat grill to medium. Grill 4 fresh árbol or thai chiles, 3 large tomatoes, 2 serrano chiles, and 1 jalapeño chile, turning frequently, until well charred, 2-3 minutes for the árbol chiles, 6-7 minutes for the tomatoes, 4-5 minutes for the serrano chiles, and 7-8 minutes for the jalapeño chiles. Transfer each item to a plate when it's done. Core the tomatoes, stem the chiles, and roughly chop them along with 3 cloves garlic. Transfer all the ingredients to a food processor and pulse 3-4 times until well combined but still chunky. Transfer salsa to a bowl, season with salt to taste, and serve with poblano chiles stuffed with beef and cheese (see page 59) or tortilla chips, if you like. Makes about 3 cups.

MEXICAN-AMERICAN WINERY



THE RISE OF THE VINEYARD WORKER

Like other vast human creations—the pyramids of Giza, Notre Dame, the Taj Mahal—the sweeping vineyards of California owe their being, in large part, to massive physical effort. The clearing of the land, the planting, and the endless pruning, irrigation, grafting, spraying, harvesting, and countless other tasks required to make millions of vines flourish are labors that have traditionally been (and continue to be) done primarily by Mexican migrants and their descendants.

The original migrants began arriving in the state in large numbers in 1942 under the *bracero* (guest worker) program, a collaboration between the American and Mexican governments originally intended to offset wartime labor shortfalls but continuing until 1964. It's probably no exaggeration to say that the modern-day California wine business wouldn't exist without their efforts.

Within the past two or three decades, Mexican-Americans have begun assuming higher-profile roles in the wine industry. They've become farm and vineyard managers, winemakers, and vineyard consultants and, increasingly, are opening wineries of their own. Manny Frias of Frias Family Vineyard in St. Helena and Michael Trujillo of Karl Lawrence Cellars in Napa made their first wines in 1991. Now there are at least a dozen established Latino-owned wineries in California, including Ceja Vineyards, Gustavo Thrace, Alex Sotelo Cellars, and Renteria Wines, and more are emerging. (Arturo and Ana Keller, father and daughter, of Keller Estate in Petaluma are apparently the only Mexicans—as opposed to Mexican-Americans—who own a California winery.) “We expect the number of Latin-owned wineries to grow exponentially within the next five years,” says Sandra Gonzalez, a Sacramento-based marketer, whose *Vino con Vida* communications company focuses on Latino wine producers and consumers. Most of these new wineries are family run, are built on decades' worth of savings and experience, and utilize the skills of the college-educated younger generation.

A burning issue in the wine industry these days is HR 4437—the proposed bill, otherwise known as the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005, that ignited major protests all over the country this past spring. The bill would, among other things, impose stiffer penalties for illegal immigration and would criminalize as felons all illegal aliens. Even now, there are labor shortages in the vineyards, say vineyard managers. “The work remains tedious, and there aren't too many people willing to toil in the variable weather conditions year-round,” says Hector Bedolla, who sits on the board of the California Association of Winegrape Growers. “Although conditions have indeed improved in terms of there now being charities and other organizations that provide support to the workers, it is still very, very hard work.”

When I asked Vanessa Robledo how her family felt about the bill, she replied diplomatically, “We always express ourselves through our wine.” But on Mexican Independence Day (September 16) this year, they released a syrah-cabernet-merlot blend called *Los Braceros* (The Guests), 10 percent of the profits from which will go to Vineyard Workers Services in Sonoma, a charity that aids field-workers. —M.T.

the time their current home was finally ready, the relatives had moved out and most of the kids had gotten married and found homes of their own. “At last they built this house, and everybody disappeared!” says Vanessa, laughing.

It wasn't so easy to cook food that was inflected with the flavors of Michoacán in those early days, Maria says, because the ingredients were hard to locate. But she did her best to match what she remembered, making do with olive oil instead of lard and trying whatever chiles and beans she could find. When no tortillas were available, Reynaldo would come home from an arduous day in the fields and hand-grind corn so that she could make them.

Now she can get everything, even proper Michoacán cheeses and fresh Mexican crema, similar to crème fraîche, and the right pork cuts for posole—but her cooking reflects decades of adaptation to a U.S. pantry. She still likes olive oil, though, for its light taste, and isn't averse to using a dash of steak seasoning here and there.

She's using both right now, for a skilletful of her chiles rellenos—fat, chopped-steak-stuffed poblano peppers in a crisp, puffy casing of beaten egg. “It gives me much

MEXICAN-AMERICAN WINERY

pleasure to cook,” she says. She even organizes feasts for hundreds of people at a time, for special events and celebrations of Mexican holidays, at the vineyard’s tasting room (the biggest, the harvest festival in October, is open to the public and features mariachis).

How on earth do they manage to get along, all 11 of them, as both relatives and co-workers? “Well, we don’t always agree,” Vanessa says. “But we always find a way to work things out. What keeps us together is knowing what my parents went through.” They also learned to co-operate early on, by working the vines

together: every day after school and on weekends, the children were in the fields with their father; Vanessa began farming the vineyards when she was eight. And, she says, there’s her mother’s cooking. “Mom keeps us all together, and the way she does that is through her food.” Should one of the children, all of whom live within a 15-mile radius, attempt to bow out of Sunday lunch, Maria is quick to get on the phone, cajoling him

or her into coming over. “Mom is the family glue,” adds Everardo, the affable second-born son.

REYNALDO FINISHES cutting up pork ribs for the posole and suggests that we

Below, shrimp and crab ceviche on fried tortillas. Facing page, left, chardonnay vines on the Robledo family’s Rancho Emiliano; right, Reynaldo Robledo Sr. cradling his granddaughter Victoria Herrera.

RECIPE

Tostadas de Ceviche de Camarón y Jaiba

(Shrimp and Crab Ceviche on Fried Tortillas)

SERVES 6

The word *tostada* means toasted in Spanish. In Mexico, *tostada* refers to a corn tortilla that’s fried to a crisp. It may also refer to a dish that uses the crunchy tortilla as a kind of edible plate for all sorts of delicious ingredients, in this case a luscious shrimp and crab salad typical of Michoacán, the seaside Mexican state where the Robledos come from.

Canola oil

18 4”-5” corn tortillas (cut 6” tortillas with a round cutter, if necessary)

1½ lbs. cooked medium shrimp, peeled, deveined, and chopped

¾ lb. lump crabmeat

¼ cup fresh lemon juice

2 tbsp. chopped cilantro

1 large cucumber, peeled, seeded, and chopped

2 large tomatoes, chopped

1-2 jalapeño chiles, stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped

1 small red onion, finely chopped

Salt

2 avocados, peeled, seeded, and cut into slices

2 limes, cut into wedges

1. Pour oil into a heavy medium pot to a depth of 1” and heat over medium-high heat until temperature registers 350° on a deep-fry thermometer. Working in batches, fry tortillas until light golden brown, turning once, about 30 seconds. Transfer tostadas to a paper towel-lined plate to let drain and cool.

2. Put shrimp, crab, lemon juice, cilantro, cucumbers, tomatoes, jalapeños, onions, and salt to taste into a large bowl and stir to combine. Spoon ceviche evenly onto tostadas, garnish each with a slice of avocado, and serve with lime wedges on the side.



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go outside for a grafting demonstration. Fall is actually the worst time to cut into a grapevine, he explains, because the sap sits low at this time of year; it must be flowing high in the plant to help the graft adjust to the rootstock. "I can do it now, but only because I know the plant," he says. With a thick, sharp knife, he snicks an angled cut into the top of a one-year-old trunk and then a slit into the angle itself, into which he inserts a short piece of three-year-old budwood, taken from the arm of another vine. He bandages the graft carefully. "This will produce next year," he says. He has, in essence, fast-forwarded the trunk, encouraging it to produce fruit three years sooner than it would otherwise.

Next we drive through the low, flat Rancho Los Hermanos vineyard, its chardonnay and pinot noir vines stripped of fruit now and the leaves turned golden green. As we bump along, pieces of his story emerge. I've already heard about his first days of pruning in Calistoga and how he proved to be such an exceptional worker that he was supervising a crew of 35 men—including his father—in less than a year. And I know that he went to work for Sonoma-Cutrer six years later as a vineyard manager, developing a reputation for an uncanny skill at growing grapes and especially at the delicate art of grafting.

"I tried to learn things on my own, without pay," he says now. He'd stay





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on after a full day at work, immersing himself in every aspect of viticulture, from driving farm vehicles to combating pests. Curtis Ranches, where he began working in 1982, even sent him to France to teach workers his time-compressing grafting technique. (The French scoffed at first but stopped two weeks later when the vines began to bud.) By 1984, he'd saved up enough to buy 13 acres of land in a debris-strewn field on a former landing strip in the Los Carneros area. "It was an

RECIPE

Chiles Rellenos

(Poblano Chiles Stuffed with Beef and Cheese)

SERVES 4

Maria Robledo employs an interesting technique with her recipe: she leaves the seeds inside the chiles so that they'll mingle with the stuffing, adding a little spark of heat.

8 large poblano chiles
 1¼ lbs. beef sirloin, trimmed and cut into ½" pieces
 1½ tsp. garlic salt
 1 tsp. steak seasoning, preferably McCormick Montreal Steak Seasoning
 1¼ cups extra-virgin olive oil
 ½ cup cooked short-grain white rice
 ½ cup cotija cheese, grated (see page 102)
 ½ cup monterey jack cheese, grated
 Salt and freshly ground black pepper
 1 cup flour
 6 egg whites
 3 egg yolks

1. Place a rack about 4 inches from the broiler element and preheat. Lay chiles on a baking sheet in a single layer and broil, turning once, until they just begin to blacken, about 5 minutes on each side. Transfer chiles to a paper bag and close the top (alternatively, transfer to a large bowl and cover tightly with plastic wrap). Let chiles steam for 20 minutes. Peel charred skin off of chiles, leaving seeds and stem intact (discard skin). Using a small knife, make a 1"-long lengthwise slit near the top of each chile to form a pocket. Set aside.

2. Put beef, garlic salt, and steak seasoning into a medium bowl and toss to coat. Heat ¼ cup of the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Working in 2 batches, brown the beef, about 5 minutes per batch. Transfer beef to a large bowl. Let cool slightly, then add rice and cheeses to beef, season with salt and pepper to taste, and stir to combine. Stuff each chile with about ½ cup of the beef mixture. Set aside.

3. Put flour into a wide, shallow dish. Put egg whites into a large bowl and beat until soft peaks form. Add yolks to whites and beat gently to combine. Heat remaining oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Working in 2 batches, dredge chiles in flour, shaking off excess, then dredge in egg mixture and transfer to skillet. Fry chiles until golden brown on all sides, about 8 minutes. Transfer chiles to a paper towel-lined plate to let drain; sprinkle with salt. Serve immediately, with grilled tomato salsa (page 55), if you like.

Clockwise from far left: Reynaldo Robledo Sr. demonstrating how to graft grapevines; a plate of chiles rellenos freshly fried by Maria Robledo; poblano chiles being scorched on a burner to remove their skins; Vanessa Robledo pouring from a bottle of her family's Robledo Los Carneros Chardonnay 2001.

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airport before. I took 17 truckloads to the dump.” With Maria and the children working beside him, he cultivated that land in his spare time after putting in full days as a vineyard manager. There the house now stands, and pinot vines thrive. Slowly, bit by bit, he found other parcels in Sonoma, often buying land others thought unworkable and making it produce. Rancho

Los Hermanos was one of them. “People were saying it was no good, but I knew it was good.”

Now we’re crossing the Napa River, and Reynaldo talks about what has driven him for so long, his voice thickening with emotion. “I suffered a lot, and I don’t want my family to suffer the same. I wanted to have at least ten acres for each of them, so they would all have a way to make a living. That was my dream, and I have passed that.” Still, he worries. “I think, What if I don’t make it? If I lose everything, I am too old to start again.” He’s depending on his family now, after all their years of depending on him.

Even out here on the land, Reynaldo’s family surrounds us. This vineyard, Rancho Los Hermanos (The Brothers), is named for all his sons. Next to it is Rancho Los Quatez (The Twins), for Luis and Francisco. Other vineyards are Rancho La Familia, Rancho Maria, and Rancho Emiliano. From the winery itself are wines named after family: Two Sisters is a late-harvest sauvignon

blanc, dedicated to his daughters; Seven Brothers, a crisp sauvignon blanc with a hint of grapefruit, is his best seller. In 2004, the winery launched its La Familia Collector’s Series, a reserve cabernet available only at the winery, labeled with Reynaldo and Maria’s wedding photo. The 2005 bottling features a shot of the entire family. This year’s release has a portrait of Lorena, the oldest, along with a brief biography. The series will continue, says Vanessa, all the way down to Emiliano.

Even the Robledo wine club, now with 1,200 members, is called La Familia and offers memberships on three different levels—*padrinos* (godfathers), *tios* (uncles), and *primos* (cousins). The funny thing, says Vanessa, is that some of the members actually behave like relatives, inviting the Robledos over for dinner and even to their own reunions. Reynaldo’s world truly is

Tasting Notes

We tasted a range of wines from the Robledo Family Winery and from Robledo winemaker Rolando Herrera’s own Mi Sueño Winery. These were our favorites. See THE PANTRY, page 102, for sources.

MI SUEÑO RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY CHARDONNAY, ULISES VALDEZ VINEYARD, 2004 (\$38).

An immediately appealing chardonnay, with a vaguely tropical bouquet, plenty of luscious fruit, and a mouth-filling richness, all in perfect balance.

MI SUEÑO NAPA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2002 (\$60).

Dark and dense in appearance, with berries and spice in the nose and black cherries and cassis on the palate; concentrated and nicely rounded.

MI SUEÑO EL LLANO NAPA VALLEY RED WINE 2003 (\$35).

An unusual blend of cabernet (80 percent) and syrah, with lots of fruit and some Christmas-candy spice in the nose; fruity and peppery in the mouth, with dusty tannin and a pleasant finish.

ROBLEDO LAKE COUNTY PINOT BLANC 2005 (\$22).

Young, crisp, and simple, with good varietal character and a slightly greenish aftertaste that is in no way off-putting.

ROBLEDO LAKE COUNTY PINOT GRIGIO 2005 (\$18).

Light and agile, with citrus in the nose, followed by a citrusy, mineral-rich flavor. Less substantial than the best Italian pinot grigios but quite nice.

ROBLEDO LAKE COUNTY SAUVIGNON BLANC “THE SEVEN BROTHERS” 2005 (\$15).

An intense varietal aroma leads into a tasty middle-of-the-road sauvignon blanc, fresh and sufficiently acidic but not at all green or vegetal.

ROBLEDO LOS CARNEROS CHARDONNAY 2003 (\$25).

Aromatic and creamy but subtle in flavor, with medium body, attractive fruit, and good balance.

ROBLEDO LOS CARNEROS MERLOT 2002 (\$36).

A good standard interpretation of the grape, soft and not overly perfumey, with hints of blackberry.

ROBLEDO LOS CARNEROS PINOT NOIR 2003 (\$28).

Light and not very complicated, but easy to drink and unmistakably pinot noir.

—THE EDITORS

Below, the winery tasting room, outfitted with furniture from Michoacán. Facing page, right, Maria Robledo prepares lunch; far right, a party decoration; bottom, quail braised in tomatillo-chile sauce.



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his family, and the larger that family, it seems, the better.

ALL THE ROBLEDOS are deep into lunch now, at the long table next to the vines. Clusters of wine bottles and bowls of salsa are arranged for pairing with the fragrant dishes that Maria has made. For her tostadas, piled high with shrimp, crab, and avocado, Maria has set out the refreshing Seven

Brothers sauvignon blanc. Initially I'm skeptical about drinking the pinot noir with the posole: surely the earthy stew will trample on the wine, I think, but instead it brings out the deep cherry notes in the pinot, and the wine somehow broadens and mellows the spiciness of the posole. The chiles rellenos, crisp and light on the outside, meaty on the inside, find their match in the firmly tannic syrah. The

names of each person in the Robledo family and a brief definition: "Robledo (rō 'blā 'dō), *n.* 1. oak tree; strength, longevity and grace." It's a name that suits them, and their hopes. ✍

THE PANTRY, page 102: *Information on the Robledo Family Winery and the wines in our Tasting Notes, plus sources for dried chiles, Mexican brown sugar, cotija cheese, and quail.*



RECIPE

Guisada de Guilota

(Quail Braised in Tomatillo-Chile Sauce)

SERVES 4

In this dish the sour tomatillos add body and a tangy background to the deep, earthy chile sauce that the quail simmers in. See THE PANTRY, page 102, for a source for hard-to-find Mexican ingredients

- 1½ lbs. tomatillos, husked and rinsed
- 12 dried árbol chiles, stemmed
- 6 dried cascabel chiles, stemmed
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- Salt
- 6 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 6 quail (about 1½ lbs.), halved lengthwise, wingtips removed, rinsed and dried well
- 2 tsp. steak seasoning, preferably McCormick Montreal Steak Seasoning

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil over high heat. Add tomatillos and boil until tender, about 8 minutes. Drain and set tomatillos aside.

2. Preheat oven to 350°. Working over a large piece of aluminum foil, break open chiles, spilling seeds onto the foil. Wrap foil over chiles and seeds to form a package and roast in oven until fragrant and darkened, about 15 minutes. Put chiles with seeds, garlic, and 1 cup water into a blender and purée until smooth. Add tomatillos, cumin, and salt to taste and blend just until incorporated, leaving tomatillos chunky. Set tomatillo-chile mixture aside.

3. Heat 4 tbsp. of the oil in a large deep skillet over medium-high heat. Working in 2 batches, cook quail on each side until deep golden brown, about 5 minutes per side. Transfer quail to a paper towel-lined plate and wipe skillet clean. Reduce heat to low, add remaining oil, and return quail to skillet. Sprinkle quail with steak seasoning and cook, covered, for 30 minutes. Add tomatillo-chile mixture to skillet with quail, stir to combine, cover, and simmer until falling apart and very tender, about 2 hours. Divide quail between 4 bowls and serve with warm corn tortillas, if you like.

quail, browned and then braised in a silky, forceful, brick red salsa, is fine with the syrah but also just plain good on its own, and even the little kids are sucking the meat off the bones, ringing their mouths with salsa.

In all the wines, the fruit shows through, which is winemaker Herrera's goal: "I like my wines to have concentration and richness, as long as they show the variety." Besides making wine for his father-in-law, he vinifies for four other companies and still has found the time to create a label of his own: *Mi Sueño* (My Dream). At the end of dinner he gives his children a tiny cup of wine, teaching them to drink it very slowly so that they can savor the flavors. After an hour or so, the family members have mostly dispersed, taking with them the tumble of little shoes and socks left on the front steps.

The Robledo Family Winery's website opens onto an illustration of an oak tree, superimposed with the





Kékfrankos

from a

FORMER Kulák

Ferenc Takler survived communism to produce *glorious* Hungarian wines



Ferenc Takler, above, sampling a glass of kékfrankos at his winery in Southern Transdanubia, in Hungary. Facing page, the cellar at Takler Winery.

BY ROGER MORRIS | PHOTOGRAPHS BY JÖRG BROCKMANN

FLOWING SOUTH FROM VIENNA, the waters of the storied Danube River slip across the Hungarian border, wind their way into the capital, Budapest, and then chug toward Serbia and Romania and, ultimately, the Black Sea. About 90 miles downstream from Budapest, near the village of Decs in an area known as Southern Transdanubia, 56-year-old Ferenc Takler's winery sits on the first line of low, undulating hills that rise from the fields along the river's western bank. A lightly traveled, two-lane country road runs along the bottom of the gentle slope. On either side of the winery are quiet neighborhoods of comfortable homes situated

TAKLER

Takler is enjoying success with not only international varieties of grapes but native ones like kadarka as well

on small lots interspersed with vegetable gardens.

Takler's winery is at the vanguard of a winemaking renaissance taking place here. While the wines of Eger and Tokaj have historically been the pride of Hungarian viticulture, Szekszárd and Villány, Southern Transdanubia's two main appellations, are beginning to make their pres-

ence known on the world market. Several wines from the region were awarded medals at the 2005 Challenge International du Vin, in Bordeaux, and Takler's 2003 Premarius red blend won the special prize for best Hungarian wine at the 2006 Cita-delles du Vin competition, also in Bordeaux. Takler and other winemakers in the region are enjoying success not just with



Ozporökölt (venison goulash), above, as prepared by Zsuzsa Takler. Facing page, workers harvesting grapes by hand in the Szekszárd region of Hungary.

RECIPE

Ozporökölt

(Venison Goulash)

SERVES 4

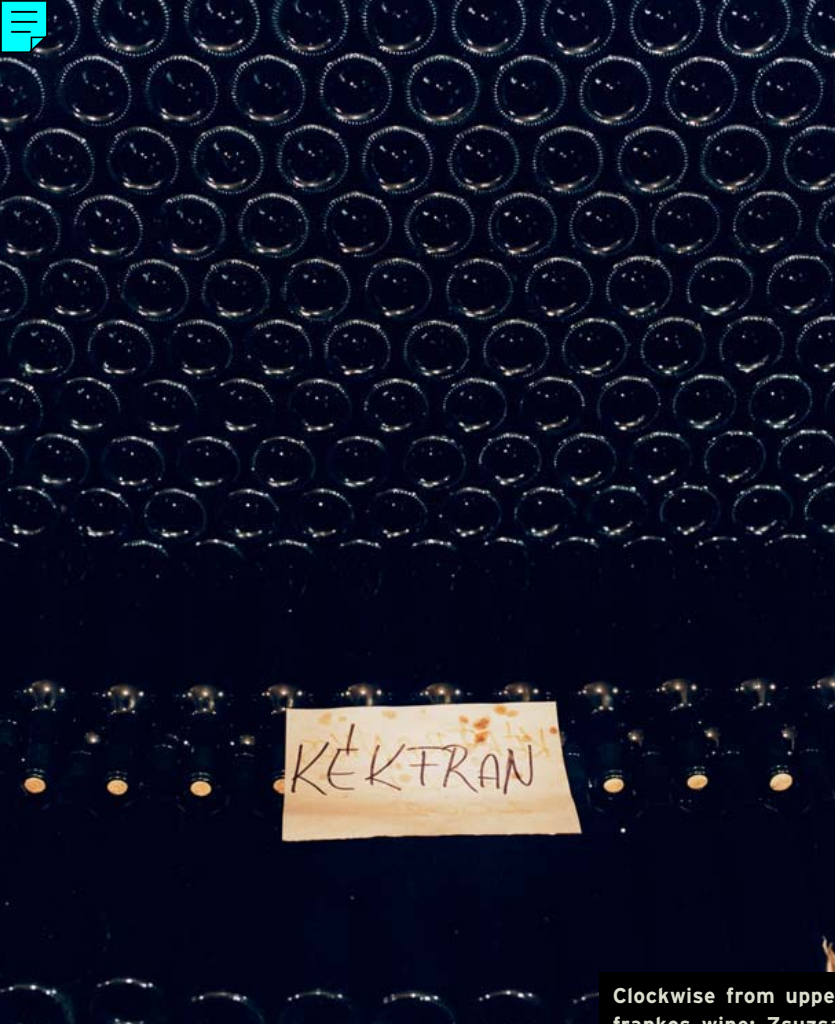
In Hungary, the dish most of us think of as goulash is usually called pörkölt, meaning stewed. Beef chuck or pork shoulder may be used in place of the venison in this version of Zsuzsa's recipe.

- 2 lbs. leg of venison, cut into 2" chunks (see page 102)
- 1 tbsp. white wine vinegar
- 1/4 lb. smoked bacon, finely chopped
- 1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 1/2 tbsp. hot paprika, preferably Hungarian (see page 102)
- 1/4 tsp. dried ground thyme
- 1/4 tsp. dry mustard
- 4 whole allspice
- 4 juniper berries
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 small tomato, cored and chopped
- 1/2 green bell pepper, cored, seeded, and finely chopped
- 1 cup red wine, preferably merlot
- Salt
- 6 medium yukon gold potatoes (about 2 lbs.), peeled; cut lengthwise into wedges
- 1/4 cup butter, cubed
- 2 tsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 6-8 slices crusty white bread

1. Put venison and vinegar into a bowl; cover with boiling water. Put bacon into a large pot over medium heat; cook until crisp, 6-8 minutes. Add onions and cook until softened, 6-8 minutes. Drain venison; add to onions. Increase heat to medium-high and cook until just browned, 8-10 minutes. Stir in 1 cup water, paprika, thyme, mustard, allspice, juniper, garlic, tomatoes, and peppers; reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer, covered, until venison is just tender, about 2 hours. Uncover pot, add wine and salt to taste, and cook until venison is very tender and liquid has thickened, about 1 1/2 hours more.

2. Put potatoes into a pot; cover with salted water; boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer until soft, 10-12 minutes. Drain potatoes and toss in a bowl with butter, parsley, and salt and pepper to taste. Serve goulash with potatoes and bread.





Clockwise from upper left: bottles of kékfrankos wine; Zsuzsa Takler's sour cream rolls; a door at Takler's winery; Ferenc Takler's sons, András, left, and Ferenc Jr., right.



TAKLER

Takler's goal is to return Hungary to its former status as the greatest wine country in eastern Europe

RECIPE

Sárközi Tejfeles Büjtök

(Sour Cream Rolls)

MAKES 2 DOZEN

These soft and tangy rolls are the best when they're eaten still warm and gooey.

5³/₄ cups flour, sifted
2 cups warm milk
1 1/4-oz. package active dry yeast
1 tbsp. sugar
1 tbsp. plus 2 1/2 cups sour cream
Salt
3/4 cup plus 3 tbsp. margarine, softened
Freshly ground black pepper

1. Stir together 3/4 cup flour, 1/2 cup milk, yeast, and sugar in a large bowl to make a loose dough. Cover with a towel; let rise in a warm spot until doubled in size, 1-1 1/2 hours.

2. Whisk together remaining milk, 1 tbsp. sour cream, and 1 1/2 tsp. salt in a medium bowl; add mixture to risen dough. Add remaining flour and 2 tbsp. of the margarine and mix. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface; knead until soft and smooth, 10-12 minutes. Shape dough into a ball, dust with flour, and transfer to a large bowl. Cover with a towel; let rise in a warm spot until doubled in size, about 1 1/2 hours.

3. Preheat oven to 450°. Grease a 9" x 13" pan with 1 tbsp. of the margarine. Divide dough into 24 equal pieces; roll each into a 10"-long rope. Tie each rope into a knot. (Keep dough ropes covered with a towel while working.) Arrange knots in pan in a single layer. Cover with a towel and let rise in a warm spot until about one-third larger, 40-45 minutes. Brush knots with 4 tbsp. margarine (melted) and bake until golden brown, about 15 minutes. Reduce heat to 350°; bake until cooked through and deep golden brown, about 5 minutes more.

4. Heat remaining margarine in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Stir in remaining sour cream and season with salt and pepper to taste. Cook, stirring constantly, until just hot, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat. Using tongs, separate knots while still hot and dip in sour cream sauce to coat; transfer to a large platter. Pour any leftover sauce over knots, cover loosely with a towel, and let soften for 10 minutes. Eat warm.

international grape varieties like cabernet sauvignon and merlot but also with native grapes, such as kadarka and kékfrankos.

IT HAS BEEN A LONG ROAD back for Hungarian wines. The Communist takeover in 1945 and the 45 years of Soviet domination that followed battered the Hungarian wine industry, which was turned into a fountain of cheap, high-alcohol wines meant to quench the thirst of the rest of the Soviet empire. In vineyards across the country, low-yielding, quality vines were overcropped or uprooted in favor of prolific ones, and some private cellars that were not part of the production system were either abandoned or treated disrespectfully.

As a prominent landowner whose family had grown grapes in the area since the mid-1700s, Ferenc Takler suffered more than most winemakers. In 1978 the Soviets branded him a *kulák*—a pejorative term for landed peasants deemed class enemies—and threw him off his property without compensation. His estate and others like it were broken up into small plots and redistributed. "My two young sons and I were on the street with not any money for a flat," he says, as he stands with his wife, Zsuzsa, in their small tasting room. Takler was only 28 at the time, but he and Zsuzsa managed to keep their young family together with the help of family and friends. Eventually they renovated a burned-out home and turned it into a winery. When the Communist government fell in 1990, Takler joined other Hungarian vintners in striving to elevate the wine industry, a goal now achieved. "We have come a long way in a dozen or so years," he says proudly.

HUNGARY HAS a remarkable viticultural heritage and has long been renowned for both its fiery, slow-maturing red wines and its rich white dessert wines. Its first

national vineyard classification took place in the 1708, earlier than such classifications in most other parts of Europe. At about the same time, wines from Tokaj—known for both dessert and white table wines—were finding favor in the French and other imperial courts. Throughout the 19th century, the Hungarians were ranked among the world's best winemakers. The late wine importer and writer Frank Schoonmaker called Hungary "traditionally, the greatest wine country of Eastern Europe". For Takler and his colleagues, the goal is to return Hungary to that status.

A friendly yet intense man with a florid face that Brueghel might have wanted to



depict, Takler walks through his cellar brandishing a wine thief (a tube-shaped sampling device) like a scepter, a man clearly enjoying a measure of vindication in making the types of quality table wines that the Soviet system wouldn't permit. His two sons have become his chief assistants—András, the older, as the business manager and Ferenc Jr. as the cellar master.

Because the area's vineyards were carved up as part of the land redistribution that took place during the Communist era, Takler has been unable to build a completely contiguous

ROGER MORRIS, a Pennsylvania-based marketing and communications consultant, writes frequently on wine for SAVEUR.

TAKLER

Takler's 2003s are stunning, combining smooth, elegant fruit essence with integrated tannins



RECIPE

Rácponty

(Baked Carp with Sour Cream Sauce)

SERVES 6

Carp's meaty flesh stands up well to the bacon and sour cream sauce in this dish. Bluefish makes a good substitute if carp isn't available.

6 medium yukon gold potatoes (about 2 lbs.)
Salt

1/2 lb. smoked bacon, finely chopped
3 medium tomatoes, cored and cut into
1/4"-thick slices

1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced
1/2 green bell pepper, cored, seeded, and
chopped

Freshly ground black pepper
3 tbsp. butter, melted

1 whole carp, cleaned (about 5 lbs.)
2 tsp. hot paprika, preferably Hungarian
(see page 102)

1 cup sour cream
1 tbsp. flour

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Put potatoes into a medium pot, cover with salted water, and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until just tender, about 25 minutes. Drain. Peel potatoes while still warm; let cool. Slice potatoes crosswise into 1/3"-thick slices.

2. Cook bacon in a skillet over medium-high heat until crisp, about 6-8 minutes. Arrange potatoes, overlapping slightly, in bottom of a large ovenproof dish. Top with tomatoes, onions, peppers, and bacon with its fat, seasoning with salt and pepper to taste between layers. Pour butter over top.

3. Make crosswise incisions in skin of carp (on both sides) spaced about 1" apart from the tail to the head, just barely cutting into the flesh. Sprinkle carp all over with paprika and salt to taste; place on top of vegetables. Bake until carp is three-fourths cooked through and potatoes and tomatoes are beginning to brown, about 40 minutes.

4. Meanwhile, whisk together sour cream, flour, and salt to taste in a bowl. Remove carp from oven, pour sour cream mixture over top, and bake until vegetables are golden brown and carp is completely cooked through, 20-25 minutes more.

TAKLER

estate anew; the cost of doing so would be prohibitive. Instead, he now farms nearly a dozen separate plots spread across the region. Although he produces a small amount of chardonnay, he focuses mainly on red wines, cultivating *kékfrankos*, *kadarka*, *merlot*, *cabernet franc*, and *cabernet sauvignon*. He is also now experimenting with *syrah*.

Among Takler's wines are several proprietary blends and varietals that are sold both in Hungary and in the United States. He also makes a *bikavér*, otherwise known as "bull's blood", the traditional Hungarian meritage-style blend. Bull's blood is defined as a blend of three or more red varieties that can be made only in the *Szekszárd* and *Eger* regions. During the Communist era, bull's blood from *Eger*—*egri bikavér*—was imported into the United States as an affordable wine but one of dubious quality. That image is slowly changing; the revolution in Hungarian winemaking has led to vast improvements in bull's blood.

While Zsuzsa goes off to tend a pot of traditional paprika-flavored chicken stew with *spätzle* to feed lunchtime visitors (for more on Zsuzsa Takler's cooking, see box, right), Takler continues our tour of his very modern cellar, filled with stainless-steel tanks and a modern press. Of the foreign-made wines he has tasted, he tells me, *zinfandels* from California have had a big impact on him ("small berries with smooth tannins"). The *zinfandel* influence is apparent in his 2003 reds, which were the product of an unusually long, hot summer.

With his 2003s, Takler has gone beyond mere respectability; tasted in barrel, his red wines are stunning, combining smooth, elegant fruit essence with integrated tannins and California-level alcohol. The Takler *kékfrankos*, for example, is huge and generous—portlike from its superripe fruit, with tinges of cognac aromas in the finish. The *bikavér* is more approachable. A blend of *kékfrankos* (38 percent), *merlot* (25 percent), *cabernet sauvignon* (20 percent), and lesser amounts of *cabernet franc* and *kadarka*, it has notes of blueberries and creamy chocolate. *Bikavér* is Takler's personal wine of choice, and he has won med-



THE Takler Table

During past harvests, when the winery's annual production was much smaller, Zsuzsa would make enough of her hearty paprikash or smoky *ozpörkölt* (venison goulash) to feed her family as well as all their seasonal workers. A few years ago, she realized that the number of hired hands had grown too large for her to continue offering food to everyone, but she still enjoys cooking for a crowd and hauls out her *bogracs* whenever guests are staying for lunch or dinner.

A meal at the Taklers' is typically a straightforward affair. The paprikash, venison goulash, and bean soup (made with dried white beans, smoked sausage, carrots, celery root, cherry peppers, and caraway seed) she serves are standards throughout Hungary. They are often accompanied by a specialty of the *Szekszárd* region—salty little rolls called *sárközi tejfeles büjtök*, which Zsuzsa drizzles with a sour cream sauce.

In *Szekszárd*, fish—plentiful in the Danube and the region's many lakes—is consumed almost daily, and Zsuzsa likes to bake carp with sliced potatoes, bacon, tomatoes, and green peppers and then top them with a tangy sauce of sour cream thickened with a little flour. According to Zsuzsa, this dish, called *rácponty*, was created in the mid-19th century by Serbs who fled to Hungary and settled along the Danube.

Mrs. Takler's meals almost always feature a simple salad of butter or green-leaf lettuce tossed with white wine vinegar, acacia honey, and a sprinkle of salt. "Most Hungarians use sugar for their salad dressing," she says, "but I grew up with honey that my father harvested, so I like to substitute it whenever a recipe calls for sugar. It tastes like flowers, but it's meaty. You can bite into it." She also admits that although her husband isn't very fond of sweets, when she comes by a fresh batch of acacia honey, it'll usually find its way into one of her desserts. Whether the result is little honey cakes or a honey-laced grape strudel with white wine sauce, nobody, not even Takler himself, seems to mind. —Camas Davis

Above left, Zsuzsa Takler making grape-filled strudel with white wine sauce; right, the strudel being folded over. Facing page, baked carp with sour cream sauce.

TAKLER

als for it at the Bordeaux competitions.

The winemaking at the Takler facility uses a combination of new and traditional techniques. The handpicked grapes are fermented in cooled tanks for around three weeks in total. However, about one-third of the fermenting must is placed in open tanks in order for more oxygen to get into the wine. Both large and small oak barrels, new and used, are utilized for aging, and the wines remain on wood for 12 to 20 months, depending on the robustness of the wine.



LATER, OVER A LUNCH featuring Zsuzsa's chicken stew and a 2002 barrel sample of the winery's hallmark bordeaux-style blend, Regnum, we talk about wines from the other primary red-wine area of Transdanubia, Villány, located farther south, where we visited the previous day and where Takler has an assortment of winemaking friends. One of them was Pal Debreczeni, who, tragically, died in an automobile accident not long ago. "Pally



Above left, Ferenc Takler enjoys a glass of his rosé, celebrated for its substantial fruitiness; right, kékfrankos grapes. Facing page, bean soup with "pinched" pasta.

PAL'S LEGACY

After Tokaj, Villány is perhaps Hungary's most popular wine region. Approaching the town of Villány, one is struck by the rows of two-story white buildings along the hillsides, many with brightly painted doors. These are historic press houses, which are still used today by small winemakers. Red grape varieties here include kadarka and another Hungarian variety called kékoportó, as well as cabernet sauvignon, merlot, pinot noir, syrah, and zweigelt (an Austrian cross).

Villány's Pal Debreczeni was considered one of Hungary's best winegrowers at the time of his death, in 2004 in a car accident. With his wife, Monika, he owned a winery called Vylyan, located west of town at the head of a long hillside adjacent to a large stone quarry. It's a modern facility, one of the premier wineries in the region. Monika, an elegant, well-spoken businesswoman, has vowed to implement the plans she and her husband laid for the winery. "We are planting 11 hectares [27 acres] this year for a total of 125 hectares [308 acres]," she said on a tour of her vineyards not long after her husband died. "None are in the valley; they are all hillside." The soil, she pointed out, is clay over limestone, and she explained how she and Pal had gradually increased vine density to obtain greater fruit intensity. She is also continuing with their plan to be producers of biodynamically grown wines. "The main thing is to respect nature," she said. "This is the beauty in it, to work in harmony."

And there is harmony in her wines—the crisp chardonnay, with its fresh-apple flavor; the kékoportó, full of raspberries, which has a pleasant chalkiness; the zweigelt, redolent of spicy rhubarb; and the syrah, bursting with blueberries and chocolate. "Vintage by vintage, we are systematically looking to make complex wines," she tells me. So far, she deserves high marks for progress. —R.M.

RECIPE

Bableves

(Bean Soup with "Pinched" Pasta)

SERVES 6-8

This satisfying bean soup is finished with homemade pasta bits called csipetke, which are pinched by hand. Top the soup with a spoonful of sour cream for extra richness.

1 cup dried cannellini beans, soaked overnight and drained
 1/2 lb. smoked sausage, such as kielbasa, cut into 1/2" pieces
 1/2 tsp. dried tarragon
 1/2 tsp. caraway seeds
 6 cherry peppers, stemmed
 4 medium carrots, peeled, trimmed, and cut crosswise into 3" pieces
 1 small celery root (about 2 2/3 lb.), peeled and cut into 1/4" pieces
 1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
 1 dried bay leaf
 1 1/3 cups plus 2 tbsp. flour
 2 eggs
 Salt
 1 tbsp. lard
 1 tbsp. hot paprika, preferably Hungarian (see page 102)
 1 tbsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley
 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
 Freshly ground black pepper

1. Put beans, sausage, and 14 cups water into a large pot and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until beans are half cooked, about 25 minutes. Add tarragon, caraway, peppers, carrots, celery root, onions, and bay leaf and cook, stirring occasionally, until beans are tender, 40-45 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, put 1 1/3 cups flour, eggs, and a pinch of salt into a medium bowl and mix with your hands into a dough. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and gently knead into a ball. Using your hands, pinch off a very small piece of the dough, roll it into a 1/4" ball, then pinch it between your fingertips to a 1/16" thickness. Transfer pasta to a lightly floured sheet pan and repeat with remaining dough.

3. Heat lard in a small skillet over medium heat. Add remaining flour and cook, whisking constantly, until mixture is light golden brown, about 4 minutes. Add flour mixture to soup while whisking vigorously. Add pasta, paprika, parsley, garlic, and salt and pepper to taste and simmer over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until soup has thickened and pasta is cooked through, about 30 minutes.



The handpicked grapes are fermented in **cooled tanks** for about three weeks in total



TAKLER

RECIPE

Szölös Rétes Bor Szószban

(Grape-Filled Strudel with White Wine Sauce)

SERVES 8

The word *Strudel* means whirlpool in German. This dessert's name refers to its flaky layers, which wrap around its soft, sweet filling.

FOR THE STRUDEL:

6 tbsp. butter, melted
 1/3 cup coarse semolina
 3 12" x 17" sheets frozen phyllo dough, thawed
 6 tbsp. dried bread crumbs
 2 cups seedless black grapes (about 10 oz.)
 2 egg whites, beaten to soft peaks
 1/3 cup granulated sugar
 1 tsp. vanilla sugar
 3/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
 2 tbsp. honey, preferably acacia
 1 tbsp. sour cream

FOR THE WINE SAUCE:

3/4 cup sugar
 3 tbsp. flour
 6 egg yolks
 1 1/2 cups milk
 1/2 cup white wine, preferably riesling
 1 tsp. lemon zest
 1 tsp. vanilla sugar (see page 102)

1. For the strudel: Heat 2 tbsp. butter in a small pot over medium-high heat. Add semolina and cook, stirring often, until light golden brown, 3–4 minutes. Stir in 1 1/2 cups water, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, covered, until soft and porridge-like, 5–6 minutes. Let cool.

2. Preheat oven to 350°. Grease a large baking sheet with 1 tbsp. butter; set aside. Lay 1 sheet of phyllo on a kitchen towel; brush evenly with 1 tbsp. butter; sprinkle with 2 tbsp. bread crumbs; top with a sheet of phyllo. Brush with 1 tbsp. butter; sprinkle with 2 tbsp. bread crumbs. Repeat one more time. Strew grapes over phyllo; drop semolina in dollops over top, followed by egg whites. Spread out with a rubber spatula, then sprinkle with sugars and cinnamon; drizzle with honey. Using towel to help you, roll strudel like a burrito to form a 12"-long cylinder. Transfer to prepared baking sheet; brush with sour cream. Bake until light golden brown, about 40 minutes. Let cool slightly.

3. For the sauce: Whisk together sugar, flour, and yolks in a heatproof bowl until pale yellow. Whisk in milk, wine, zest, and sugar. Place bowl over a saucepan of simmering water and cook, stirring constantly, until sauce resembles thin pudding, about 20 minutes. Strain sauce through a fine-mesh sieve; let cool over an ice bath. Cut strudel crosswise into 8 slices and serve with sauce.



Above left, grape-filled strudel with white wine sauce; right, a bottle of 2003 kadarka, made from one of Hungary's most prominent indigenous varieties.

was here when we blended this wine," Takler says, taking a sip of the Regnum. The two men met in 2002 at an industry event where they were pouring side by side and became friends, equally passionate in their desire to make world-class wines. "It's not an exaggeration to say that his death was a great loss for the Hungarian wine industry," Takler says. (For more on the wines of Villány, see box on page 70.)

As we are finishing Zsuzsa's lunch, András arrives home from a business trip to Paris. Like the rest of the family, he is bristling with pride at what the four of them have accomplished in a mere 12 years. "We think the region is evolving," he says. "Right now 10 percent of our market is export, and we have to grow that to 50 percent. We have to expand markets in Europe and the U.S.A." He pauses, searches for the right words, and smiles: "We just have to go and go!" 🍷

THE PANTRY, page 102: Sources for Takler wines, venison, hot Hungarian paprika, and vanilla sugar.



Tasting Notes

Takler wines are hard to find in the United States but worth the effort. Here are four we tasted recently. See THE PANTRY, page 102, for a source.

ROSÉ CUVÉE 2005 (\$12). A gem of a wine (kékfrankos with cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, and a bit of kadarka), sleek and slightly pétillant and full of red summer fruit—but substantial enough to drink throughout the year.

HERITAGE CUVÉE 2003 (\$24). Kékfrankos and merlot are the main players in this seductive red (with, again, the cabernet boys and a little kadarka); its ripe-cherry character is offset by an elegance almost Tuscan in style.

NOIR GOLD KÉKFRANKOS RESERVE 2003 (\$30). Not as complex in flavor or as richly textured as the Heritage Cuvée (this one is all kékfrankos), but delicious, with lean blackberry-like fruit and tobacco and chocolate in the finish.

PROPRIETOR'S RESERVE REGNUM 2002 (\$65). Mostly merlot, with 10 percent kékfrankos, adding up to a slightly stemmy, claretlike blend, with angular tannins and suggestions of mint, raspberries, and red currants. —THE EDITORS



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With their sublime balance of succulent and sour, pineapples are the most irresistible of tropical fruits

BY KELLY ALEXANDER PHOTOGRAPHS BY BROOKE SLEZAK

PRICKLY SWEET

A WOMAN'S COMING-OF-AGE JOURNEY entails lessons both great and small, but it's unusual for it to include a member of the family Bromeliaceae. Nevertheless, a pineapple, that trusty symbol of hearth and home, standing proud with its green-brown skin and its crown of swordlike leaves, played a pivotal role in my own growing up.

I was a typical college student: self-absorbed, overly confident, delineated by black liquid eyeliner. When a worldly (read: considerably older) male acquaintance from back home made a show of seducing me over the phone one day during my sophomore year, I responded with all the forethought and caution you'd expect. "Of course you can fly me down for the weekend!" I blurted out.

When I arrived, my paramour whisked me off to that most romantic of places—the nearest supermarket. Apparently his bachelor pad had no provisions, and he asked me to choose a few things to eat. Rows of pineapples stood before me in the produce section, beckoning with their promise of exotic flavor and juicy flesh. The fruit was a perfect choice, I thought, for the torrid days and nights that surely lay ahead. My date, however, looked skeptical. He leaned over and asked, "Do you know how to cut up one of those?"

My face turned red, and not from embarrassment. How could I—some-

one who'd watched her mother carve countless pineapples for the fruit salad she'd always sign up to take to potlucks—be mistaken for someone so inexperienced? At the time it never occurred to me that the guy was merely implying that the job could be daunting; no, he was challenging my very sophistication. That May–December romance ultimately proved to be a disaster, but my love for the pineapple flourished.

THE TRUTH IS THAT I've been attracted to pineapples for as long as I can remember. For me, their superiority in the realm of tropical fruit was—and is—unquestionable: a pineapple has more dimensions of flavor than any mango and is more satisfyingly solid than a mere papaya. To eat a slice of ripe pineapple is to delight in a perfect balance of acid and sugar, each bite a burst of opposing forces. Foods from carob to carrot have been deemed "nature's candy", but I think that the pineapple is the only one truly deserving of the nickname.

It didn't take me long to realize, of course, that pineapples were good

KELLY ALEXANDER, a former senior editor at SAVEUR, lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and is writing a book about the food journalist Clementine Paddleford.



PINEAPPLE

for a lot more than just Mom's potluck fruit salad. Quite possibly my favorite dessert since I first tasted it, years ago at (of all places) a Yom Kippur break-the-fast party, has been pineapple upside-down cake. And I quickly discovered that the fruit could be an asset to savory dishes as well. Toward the end of my college career in Chicago, I took to sitting at the bar at Frontera Grill, Rick Bayless's excellent Mexican restaurant, and feasting on manchamanteles, "tablecloth stainers"—a rich dish of chicken and pork stewed in a mole spiked with chunks of pineapple. I was also lucky enough to enjoy real piña coladas (that is, those made without the aid of premixed swill) on a trip to the Puerto Rican island of Culebra, where the juice was squeezed fresh and the drink was so refreshing that even the maraschino cherry garnish was a swell touch. And is there a person with a pulse who can't claim that Chinese-American staple of sweet and sour pork with pineapple, lolling in neon red cornstarchy goodness, as a guilty pleasure? In fact, when my future husband cooked that dish on our first date, I knew at once that I'd found the man for me.

THE PINEAPPLE IS REMARKABLE for reasons beyond its irresistible flavor. No small part of the fruit's international appeal has to do with its striking exterior, an outward manifestation of the more than 100 berrylike, diamond-shaped "fruitlets" that compose the fruit's flesh. The organization of those fruitlets in three interlocking spirals, in fact,

RECIPE

Rojak

(Pineapple and Jicama Salad)

SERVES 4

Rojak means mixed up in Malay, the national language of Malaysia, where this dish (right) originated. A refreshing mix of fruits and vegetables in a sweet and salty dressing, it's a popular street snack there. See THE PANTRY, page 102, for a source for hard-to-find Asian ingredients.

1/2 tbsp. belacan (Malaysian dried shrimp paste)	1 medium green mango, peeled, cored, and cut into 2" chunks
6 tbsp. gula jawa (Indonesian palm sugar)	1 small jicama (about 3/4 lb.), peeled and cut into 2" chunks
5 tbsp. kecap manis (Indonesian sweet soy sauce)	1/2 large, ripe pineapple, peeled, cored, and cut into 2" chunks
2 tbsp. fresh lime juice	1/3 cup unsalted skinned roasted peanuts, finely chopped
3-6 red thai chiles, stemmed and coarsely chopped	
Salt	
2 kirby cucumbers, stemmed and cut into 2" chunks	

1. Wrap shrimp paste in a 5"-square piece of aluminum foil to form a package; press down with heel of your hand to flatten paste into a 1/4"-thick disk. Heat a gas burner to medium-low or an electric burner to medium-high, place package directly on burner, and toast until paste begins to smoke, about 1 minute. Turn with tongs and cook for 1 minute more. Unwrap disk; let cool.

2. Put shrimp paste, sugar, soy sauce, lime juice, chiles, and salt to taste into a blender; pulse to form a smooth paste. Transfer dressing to a large nonreactive bowl, add cucumbers, mango, jicama, and pineapple, and toss to combine. Season with salt to taste. (Alternatively, arrange on a plate and drizzle with dressing.) Transfer salad to a platter, sprinkle with peanuts, and serve immediately.





PINEAPPLE



RECIPE

Tepache

(Mexican-Style Fermented Pineapple Drink)

MAKES ABOUT 3 QUARTS

This recipe for tepache (above) is an adaptation of one in *The Essential Cuisines of Mexico* by Diana Kennedy (Clarkson Potter/Publishers, 2000).

1 large ripe pineapple (about 4 lbs.), crown and base removed, outside scrubbed and rinsed
2 whole cloves
2 whole allspice
1 4"-long piece canela (Mexican

cinnamon; see page 102) or cinnamon stick
1 lb. piloncillo (Mexican brown sugar; see page 102), crushed, or 1 lb. dark brown sugar
1½ cups light beer

1. Cut the pineapple (unpeeled) into 1½" cubes. Put the cloves, allspice, and canela into a mortar and crush roughly with a pestle. Transfer the spices to a large 4- to 5-quart earthenware or glass jar with a tight-fitting lid. Add the pineapple cubes and 8 cups of water and stir to combine. Cover the jar with a lid and set in a location that receives plenty of sun (or in a warm spot) and let sit until mixture begins to ferment and become bubbly on top, about 3 days, depending on the temperature.

2. Put the piloncillo and 1½ cups water into a small pot and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the sugar has completely dissolved, 4-5 minutes. Remove from heat, let the sugar syrup cool slightly, and then add with the beer to the fermenting pineapple mixture. Stir well, cover, and leave in a warm place for 2-3 days longer, until it smells strongly fermented and appears bubbly throughout. Strain the mixture through a few layers of cheesecloth lining a fine-mesh sieve into a clean jar; discard the solids. Serve the tepache chilled or poured over ice. Store in the refrigerator for up to 4 weeks.

PINEAPPLE

RECIPE

Manchamanteles de Cerdo y Pollo

(Mole with Chicken, Pork, and Pineapple)

SERVES 4

Manchamanteles (below, right), a spicy, stewlike dish from Mexico, is considered to be one of the seven classic moles of Oaxaca. This recipe is based on one in *Authentic Mexican: Regional Cooking from the Heart of Mexico* by SAVEUR consulting editor Rick Bayless (William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1987).

- | | |
|---|---|
| 6 medium dried ancho chiles
(see page 102), stemmed,
seeded, deveined, and halved | 2 whole cloves |
| 5 tbsp. lard | 1 1/2"-long piece canela (Mexican
cinnamon, see page 102) or
cinnamon stick |
| 1 small white onion, chopped | 2 1/2"-thick slices firm white
bread, torn into small pieces |
| 5 cloves garlic, halved | 2 tbsp. cider vinegar |
| 1 lb. lean boneless pork
shoulder, cut into 2" cubes
and patted dry | Salt |
| 2 bone-in chicken breast halves
(about 1/4 lbs.), halved cross-
wise and patted dry | 1/2 large ripe pineapple, peeled,
cored, and cut into 1 1/2" cubes |
| 3 black peppercorns | 1 ripe medium plantain, peeled
and cut into 1" cubes |
| | 1 1/2 tbsp. sugar |

1. Heat a large cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Working in batches, toast chiles on both sides, pressing them down with a metal spatula, until aromatic, about 1 1/2 minutes. Transfer chiles to a large bowl, cover with boiling water, weight down with a plate, and let soak, 30 minutes. Drain.

2. Heat 4 tbsp. of the lard in the skillet over medium-low. Add onions and fry until softened, 5-6 minutes. Add garlic and cook until onions are golden brown, about 18-20 minutes. Remove onions and garlic from skillet with a slotted spoon and transfer to a blender, leaving lard in the skillet. Increase heat to medium, add pork, and cook, turning often, until golden brown on all sides, 12-14 minutes. Transfer pork to a paper towel-lined plate and set aside. Add chicken to the skillet and cook, turning often, until golden brown on all sides, about 10 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer chicken to plate with pork and set aside. Reserve skillet with any remaining lard.

3. Put peppercorns, cloves, and canela into a mortar and crush with a pestle to a powder. Transfer spices to a blender. Add 1 cup water, drained chiles, and bread and blend until smooth, 2-3 minutes. Strain mixture through a fine-mesh sieve into a medium bowl, pressing on solids with the back of a spoon. Discard solids.

4. Heat reserved skillet over medium heat, carefully add chile mixture, and fry, stirring constantly, until thickened, 4-5 minutes. Transfer chile mixture to a large heavy pot. Add pork, 2 cups water, vinegar, and salt to taste and stir to combine. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat, cover, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until pork is very tender, about 2 1/2 hours. Add chicken and pineapple and cook, covered, until chicken is cooked through, about 20 minutes.

5. Meanwhile, melt remaining lard in a medium skillet over medium heat. Fry plantains, turning often, until golden brown on all sides, about 5 minutes. Transfer plantains to the mole and stir to combine. Add sugar and salt to taste and continue to cook for 10 minutes more. Serve with corn tortillas, if you like.

is considered by mathematicians to be geometrically perfect because the number of spirals in each direction conforms to three consecutive numbers from the system of mathematical cadences called the Fibonacci series, usually eight, 13, and 21. Another appealing aspect of the pineapple is that it's the world's only known source of bromelain, a powerful enzyme that breaks down protein—that's why you see pineapple listed in so many diet menus—and is thought to be effective in relieving a host of ailments from bronchitis to (some believe) cancer.

In much of the world, and especially in Great Britain and the American South, the pineapple is also a common symbol of hospitality. We have the English to thank for that. The fruit was first grown successfully in England in a hothouse by one of Charles II's gardeners in 1661. Pineapple became a favorite of the king's and was therefore the centerpiece in many elaborate table displays at his court. By extension, the image of a pineapple was used as a fashionable decorative motif and incorporated into household objects and architectural ornamentation. Even today, pineapple iconography appears on everything from McMansion gateposts to, well, my favorite pair of flip-flops.

THE WORLD'S FIRST PINEAPPLES are believed to have grown in the tropical lowlands of what is now Brazil, along with other, mostly inedible plants in the Bromeliaceae family, such as Spanish moss. Grown wild, pineapple plants have wide stalks that act as water containers, which help nourish not only their own fruit but also a host





PINEAPPLE



HOW TO CUT UP A PINEAPPLE

1 | Slice off the pineapple's crown; then trim a good half inch off the fruit's bottom. Set the pineapple upright. **2** | Trim the rind by slicing it off the exterior of the pineapple in strips no deeper than a quarter of an inch, following the contour of the fruit; then trim off any brown "eyes" that remain. **3** | Cut the pineapple lengthwise into quarters. **4** | Slice the core off the inside of each quarter and discard it. **5** | Cut the quartered sections crosswise into cubes. —K.A.

of critters, from single-cell organisms to frogs. Their journey from miniature tropical ecosystems to their transformation into the common modern pineapple species (*Ananas comosus*) began long before Europeans arrived in South America, when indigenous tribes living in the jungly basins that surround the Orinoco and Amazon rivers started domesticating the fruit. Over the course of centuries, the pineapple was transported throughout South America to the West Indies by way of the dugout canoes that Carib Indians used to navigate the

waters off the continent's coast. It was a surprisingly easy task in that the fruit, though generally seedless, is both a perennial and easily reproduced from cuttings.

On his second trip to the Americas, in 1493, Columbus reported seeing it for the first time on the Caribbean archipelago of Guadeloupe. Later, Spanish sailors returned to Spain with cuttings of the fruit, calling it *piña* (pinecone) for its appearance. The Portuguese were responsible for taking the pineapple over subsequent centuries to

RECIPE

Pineapple Upside-Down Cake

MAKES ONE 9" CAKE

This recipe for the classic American cake (left) is an adaptation of one that appears in SAVEUR consulting editor Marion Cunningham's *The Fannie Farmer Cookbook* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1990).

12 tbsp. butter	1½ cups flour
1 cup light brown sugar	½ cup granulated sugar
5 canned pineapple rings, drained (reserve juice)	2 tsp. baking powder
5 maraschino cherries, drained and stemmed	½ tsp. salt
	½ cup milk
	1 egg

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Melt 4 tbsp. of the butter in a 9" cast-iron skillet over medium-low heat. Add brown sugar and stir until well combined. Remove skillet from heat, add ¼ cup of reserved pineapple juice, and stir well to combine. Arrange pineapple rings in a single layer in bottom of skillet and place a cherry in the center of each. Set skillet aside.

2. Put flour, granulated sugar, baking powder, and salt into a medium bowl and stir to combine. Melt remaining butter in a small pot over medium-low heat. Remove pot from heat, add milk and egg, and beat with a wooden spoon until well combined, about 1 minute. Pour milk mixture into flour mixture and beat until smooth, about 1 minute. Pour batter into skillet, covering the pineapple slices completely, and smooth out batter with a rubber spatula.

3. Bake cake until golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean, 30–35 minutes. Remove from oven and let rest for 10 minutes. Cover skillet with a large plate and carefully invert the cake onto it. Serve warm or at room temperature, if you like.



PINEAPPLE

RECIPE

Sweet and Sour Pork

SERVES 4

This recipe for sweet and sour pork (right) is based on one in *The Chinese Cookbook* by Craig Claiborne and Virginia Lee (J. B. Lippincott Company, 1972). It is most certainly a Chinese-American rendering of a Cantonese dish, employing a version of a sweet and sour sauce that is most typically used on fish, usually yellow croaker.

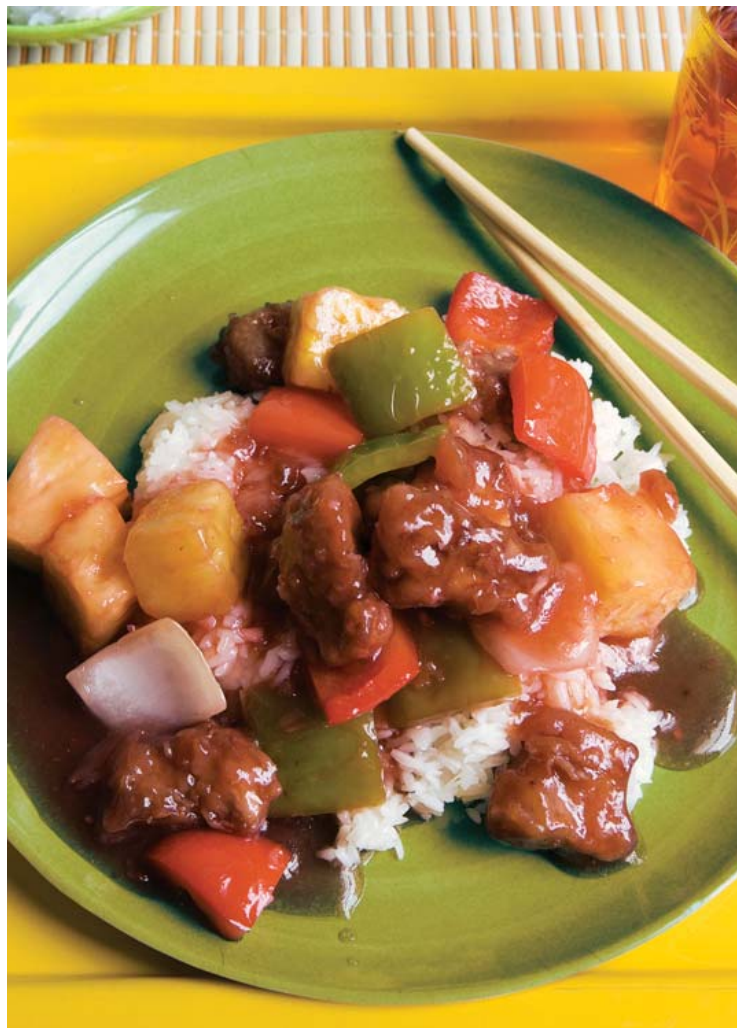
1¼ lbs. pork loin, trimmed and cut into 1" cubes	½ large ripe pineapple, peeled, cored, and cut into 1" chunks
1 tbsp. dry sherry	½ small red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and cut into 1" pieces
2 tbsp. soy sauce	½ small green bell pepper, cored, seeded, and cut into 1" pieces
Peanut oil	4 thin "coins" of peeled fresh ginger
1 cup cornstarch	1 clove garlic, minced
⅓ cup white distilled vinegar	
½ cup sugar	
Salt	
12 drops red food coloring	
1 small onion, cut into 1" pieces	

1. Using the flat side of a meat mallet, lightly pound each pork cube to a ¼" thickness. Transfer to a medium bowl, add sherry and 1 tbsp. of the soy sauce, and toss to combine.

2. Pour peanut oil into a wok to a depth of 1" and heat over medium-high heat until temperature registers 375° on a deep-fry thermometer. Put all but 2 tbsp. of the cornstarch into a wide dish. Dredge pork in cornstarch, one piece at a time, pressing down with your fingers to coat well. Discard cornstarch left in dish. Working in batches, fry pork in peanut oil until cooked through and golden brown on all sides, 4-5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to a paper towel-lined plate to let drain. Heat oil until it registers 400° on a deep-fry thermometer, then refry pork in a single batch until deep golden brown, 1-2 minutes, to make pork crispier. Return pork to plate. Discard all but ¼ cup of oil in wok; set aside.

3. Put remaining soy sauce, 1 cup water, vinegar, sugar, and salt to taste into a small saucepan; bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and stir until sugar has dissolved. Mix together remaining 2 tbsp. cornstarch with ¼ cup water in a small bowl; stir into the simmering sauce along with food coloring and 2 tbsp. additional peanut oil and simmer for 1 minute.

4. Heat wok with reserved oil over medium heat. Add onions, pineapple, peppers, ginger, and garlic and stir-fry until vegetables are crisp-tender, 5 minutes. Stir in sauce, bring to a boil, then add reserved pork and toss to combine. Serve with rice, if you like.



India, Java, and China.

Although probably introduced in the 16th century by Spanish sailors, pineapple wasn't cultivated on a large scale in Hawaii—the place with which we in America tend to associate it the most—until 1885, when one Captain John Kidwell began trial plantings of several varieties of the fruit, including the cayenne (see sidebar, below), on the island of Oahu. The advent of steamship transportation in the Pacific around the same time made it possible to ship fresh pineapples to the mainland. It was James Drummond Dole, an American with an undergraduate degree from Harvard and an interest in horticulture, who first made the fruit available worldwide when he built a pineapple cannery in 1903.

"After some experimentation," Dole explained in the 25th anniversary book of Harvard College's class of 1899, "I concluded

A USER'S GUIDE

By far the most common pineapple cultivar, both in America and internationally, and the one most often canned, is the **cayenne** or **smooth cayenne** (so called because it originated in Cayenne, the capital of French Guiana), which is high in both sugar and acid and has very firm, yellow flesh. The **queen** variety is less acidic and thus milder in flavor than

the cayenne, though its flesh is even firmer and brighter yellow. Less often imported, but sometimes available here, are the **sugarloaf**, or **pan de azucar**, grown in Central and South America, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Mexico, and the **royal African sugarloaf**, or **white pineapple**, from West Africa; both are extraordinarily delicious.

When searching for a perfect pineapple, remember that this fruit, unlike many others, doesn't

have a reserve of stored starch that will convert to sugar after it's picked; simply put, it doesn't ripen (or sweeten) after picking. Seek a uniformly firm, weighty fruit with green leaves showing no discoloration (they should be easy to pull out at the center). A ripe pineapple emits a light, pleasant fragrance; overripe pineapples have a fermented scent. At their peak, pineapples may be stored for no more than five days, unrefrigerated. —K.A.



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PINEAPPLE



that the land was better adapted to pineapples than to peas, pigs, or potatoes.... Pineapple growing created the necessity for a market, and in order to enlarge the market to the entire United States (and other countries) and to extend the marketing season throughout the entire year, a cannery seemed necessary.”

By the middle of the 20th century there were eight pineapple companies in Hawaii, and Hawaii became the pineapple capital of the world, growing more than 80 percent of the total crop. Today, it accounts for less than 2 percent of the world’s pineapples; Thailand and the Philippines have become the number one and number two producers, respectively. Among the other countries growing commercially significant quantities of pineapple are Mexico, Costa Rica, Brazil, India, and China.

As pineapple cultivation has spread around the globe, new varieties have developed, many of which are not exported to this country. I’ve heard that feasting on a pineapple in Thailand or India or Costa Rica is an entirely different experience from sampling, say, a small chunk of the fruit off of a tasting stand at my local Piggly Wiggly. If that’s true, I can’t imagine how delicious those other varieties are, because what I get here is good enough for me.

RECENTLY ONE OF MY DEAREST PALS called to tell me of a pineapple-related triumph. “I’m trying to diet,” he said, “so instead

RECIPE

Seared Foie Gras with Caramelized Pineapple

SERVES 4

This appetizer (left) is a famous and now classic dish that’s served at Wolfgang Puck’s Chinois on Main in Santa Monica. In the 1980s, Kazuto Matsusaka (now of Beacon) was the chef de cuisine; here is his version.

FOR THE SAUCE:

1 1/3 cups port
1 1/3 cups red wine
2/3 cup plum wine
2 shallots, minced
2 cups veal stock
1 cinnamon stick
2 tbsp. cold butter, cubed

FOR THE GARNISH:

1/2 cup port
1/2 cup plum wine
1/2 tsp. light brown sugar
1 4"-long piece fresh ginger, peeled and julienned

FOR THE FOIE GRAS AND PINEAPPLE:

1 1/2 tsp. sugar
4 1/4"-thick rings fresh ripe pineapple
2 tbsp. peanut oil
4 2-oz. slices cold foie gras
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/2 cup flour

1. For the sauce: Put port, red wine, plum wine, and shallots into a medium saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally, until reduced by half, about 30 minutes. Add stock and cinnamon and cook until liquid has reduced to about 1 cup, about 30–35 minutes. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve and return to saucepan (discard solids). Set aside.

2. For the garnish: Meanwhile, put port, plum wine, sugar, and ginger into a small pot and bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook until syrupy, about 35 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside.

3. For the foie gras and pineapple: Sprinkle sugar evenly over tops of pineapple slices and caramelize with a kitchen torch. Set aside in a single layer. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Generously season each piece of foie gras with salt and pepper, then dredge lightly in flour, shaking off any excess. Sear foie gras on both sides until crisp and golden brown, 1–1 1/2 minutes per side. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate.

4. To assemble: Bring sauce to a simmer over medium heat. Reduce heat to low and whisk in butter a little at a time until smooth and glossy. Place 1 piece of pineapple on each of 4 warm plates and top each with a slice of foie gras. Spoon sauce over foie gras, then top with a dollop of the ginger garnish and some of its syrup. Serve immediately.

of my normal bag of chips I grabbed some pineapple from a nearby deli—they even cut it up for you and everything.” I told him I thought it was great that he was eating more of this wonderful fruit—a cup of fresh pineapple chunks has only about 75 calories—but that the convenience of the cut-up fruit didn’t interest me. After all, I know how to cut up a pineapple. 🍍

THE PANTRY, page 102: Sources for Malaysian dried shrimp paste, Indonesian palm sugar, Indonesian sweet soy sauce, Mexican cinnamon, Mexican brown sugar, and ancho chiles.

A reunion across the generations in German-speaking Italy is fueled by dumplings, gnocchi, cured pork, and sauerkraut



IN 1970, NEWLY LIBERATED from the Marine Corps, I escaped to Europe with my wife, Lucie, and we began tracing random patterns on the map—following the strawberries north, as the saying went, which for us meant staying on the cusp of late winter snow (for skiing) and early spring warming (for trout fishing). After working our way across Bavaria and Austria, we looped south across the Italian border into the region of Südtirol (South Tyrol), or Alto Adige, passing through the town of Bozen (Bolzano) and ending up in Meran (Merano), where I wanted to try to find my grandfather's favorite cousin, Traudl Semler Tinzl. Under Hapsburg rule for more than five centuries, until the Treaty of Versailles ceded it to Italy following World War I, the Südtirol has long struggled to protect its Teutonic cultural identity—both German and Italian

Below, left to right, author George Semler, Kira Tinzl, Joergl Tinzl, and Moni Tinzl dining at Joergl's home in Meran. Right, spinach and cheese gnocchi.

Serious Eating in the Südtirol





SÜDTIROL

RECIPE

Spinatnocken und Topfenocken

(Spinach and Cheese Gnocchi)

SERVES 4

This dish is an adaptation of one made by Kira Tinzl. Resist the urge to stir the gnocchi while they simmer in the pot, lest they fall apart.

1½ lbs. stemmed spinach leaves (from about 2 large bunches), washed, drained briefly
¾ cup plus 1 tbsp. butter, softened
1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
2 cups plus 2 tbsp. ricotta, drained for 1 hour through a fine sieve
1½ cup plus 2 tbsp. flour
¾ cup finely grated parmigiano-reggiano
4 eggs, lightly beaten
1 egg yolk
Freshly grated nutmeg
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1½ cups fresh white bread crumbs
1 tbsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley

1. For the spinach gnocchi: Wilt spinach in 2 batches in a large skillet over medium-high heat, turning often, 1½ minutes per batch. Drain. Squeeze liquid from spinach; finely chop. Heat 2 tbsp. butter in skillet over medium heat. Add onions and garlic; cook until softened, about 6 minutes. Add spinach, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook, stirring often, until most of the liquid has evaporated, 16-18 minutes. Transfer mixture to a bowl; let cool. Add ½ cup flour, 14 tbsp. of the ricotta, ½ cup parmigiano, 2 eggs, yolk, pinch of nutmeg, and salt and pepper to taste; mix well. Cover; refrigerate for 2 hours.

2. For the ricotta gnocchi: Beat together the additional remaining ricotta, 3 tbsp. butter, remaining eggs, pinch of nutmeg, and salt and pepper to taste in a bowl. Stir in bread crumbs and 2 tbsp. flour. Cover; refrigerate for 2 hours.

3. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil; reduce heat to a gentle simmer. Put remaining flour into a bowl. Using 2 soup spoons, form ricotta mixture into 16 small-football-shaped gnocchi and roll gently in flour to coat; drop in water and simmer until cooked through, 16-18 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer gnocchi to a plate. Form spinach mixture the same way (without rolling in flour); simmer for 16-18 minutes (do not stir). Transfer spinach gnocchi to plate.

4. Divide gnocchi between 4 plates. Cook remaining butter in a skillet over medium-high heat until light brown, 3-4 minutes. Pour over gnocchi; sprinkle with remaining parmigiano and parsley.

are official languages there; hence the two forms of most place-names—and Traudl's late husband, Dr. Karl Tinzl, was a Südtirolean patriot and parliamentary representative who was a key figure in resisting the region's Italianization.

Meran was popular in the 19th century for its thermal springs, its mild climate, and the miraculous local "grape cure", which seems to have consisted simply of eating the local vernatsch—also called schiava—grapes. To us, the town looked like some

his son the archduke Rudolf. One of Ingwar Semler's sons was my great-grandfather, the first George Semler. The other, my great-grand-uncle Ernst, was a dropout from Kaiser Wilhelm's imperial navy—rumor has it that he was forced to resign his commission after fighting a duel with a fellow officer over the favors of a Japanese princess—who retired to the Stadlerhof to hunt, fish, and write poetry. (The family has a copy of his book *Edelweiss und Tannengrün*e with an inscription to Ernst from the Austrian



Above left, façade of the Stadlerhof, the Semler house in Meran; right, speck with pickles. Facing page, the view from Signat toward Bozen.



Italianate Alpine fantasyland, with its Eastern-influenced domes, high roofs, quirky towers, and houses inset with oriel windows over cavernous porticoes and decorated with fading frescoes. Semlers have lived in Meran since 1881, when my great-great-grandfather Ingwar Adolph Ernst Konrad Semler, a businessman from Berlin, purchased a villa there called the Stadlerhof, believed to be the property of the emperor Francis Joseph and the temporary home of

archduke Francis Ferdinand, whose assassination sparked World War I.)

My beginnings as a writer had met with scant success at the time we decided to go

GEORGE SEMLER, a writer based in Barcelona and Maine, is a frequent contributor to SAVEUR. His most recent article for the magazine was "Down East Autumn", about hunting (and cooking) game birds in Maine, in our October 2005 issue.





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to Meran, but I already knew enough of the family history to suspect that there might be a good story there. Masters of seat-of-the-pants travel, however, we had failed to write ahead and had no idea how to find Traudl—or the Stadlerhof, which was now her home. Fortunately, Meran is a small place, and we asked around until a butcher, having looked us over and apparently decided that we were all right, surrendered Frau Tinzl's address.

As we approached the fabled villa, a sturdy silver-haired woman—a perfect female version of my grandfather—emerged through the garden gate. Though she was completely unaware of my existence, much less of the fact that I had come to Meran to find her, she pointed a blocky finger at me and, with a wide smile, announced, “You must be a Semler!” She welcomed us warmly, showing us through the garden and up past the great brass SEMLER door-

RECIPE

Speckknödelsuppe

(Tyrolean Bacon-Dumpling Soup)

SERVES 8

This is an adaptation of a dish served at the Signaterhof, in the town of Signat.

1½ cups warm milk
6 tbsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley
3 eggs
1 cup finely chopped speck (Tyrolean bacon, about 5 oz.; see page 102)
3 stale white bread rolls (about ½ lb.), cut into ¼" cubes
3 tbsp. butter
1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
½ cup flour
Salt
8 cups beef broth

1. Whisk together milk, 2 tbsp. of the parsley, and eggs in a large bowl. Add speck and bread; toss to combine. Let moisten for 30 minutes.

2. Heat butter in a skillet over medium heat. Add onions; cook until softened, 8-10 minutes. Transfer to bread mixture. Mix in flour and salt to taste.

3. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over medium-high heat. Using your hands, form bread mixture into 8 large dumplings. Drop into water; simmer until cooked through, about 20 minutes.

4. Meanwhile, bring broth to a boil in a large pot over high heat. Using a slotted spoon, divide dumplings between bowls. Ladle broth into bowls and garnish generously with remaining parsley.



Above, clockwise from left: the Signaterhof; ceiling painting in the Stadlerhof dining room; Joergl Tinzl in his vineyard; crockery at the Stadlerhof. Facing page, Tyrolean bacon-dumpling soup.

plate into the villa, three floors of oak-paneled rooms with a hunting lodge-style dining room bristling with antlers. In the study upstairs, she pointed out a bullet hole in a ceiling beam. After a particularly bitter quarrel with his wife, she said, my great-grandfather had stormed upstairs and discharged a pistol. Hearing the shot and fearing that he'd done away with himself, his wife came running—only to find him rolling on the floor howling with laughter, roaring, and saying to himself, “You see? She loves me, she loves me!”

It was lunchtime, and Traudl called her

lifelong friend Vali to ask whether she'd join us. We went off to pick up Vali, and as we approached her villa, children going by us on bicycles began ringing bells and yodeling. Traudl blushed and explained that in honor of her husband Karl Tinzl's defense of Südtirolean identity, the locals sometimes paid her these little homages. With Vali in tow, we climbed up to a wood-balconied, flower-bedecked *Gasthof* (inn)—I've long since forgotten its name—on the slopes high over Meran, where we ate delicious spinatschlutzkräpfen (rye-flour ravioli filled with spinach and cheese) and a plate of

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RECIPE

Wildschwein in Rotwein
Sosse mit Polenta

(Wild Boar and Soft Polenta with Wine Sauce)

SERVES 4

This is a version of a dish served at Vögele, a famous tavern in Bozen that is housed in a 13th-century building, which once lodged such celebrated guests as J. W. von Goethe.

6 tbsp. olive oil
2 tsp. finely chopped rosemary leaves
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 4-oz. wild boar loin steaks, each about 1½" thick (see page 102)
¼ cup red wine
½ cup veal stock
1½ tbsp. raspberry jam
4 tbsp. cold butter, cubed
2½ cups milk
¾ cup fine polenta

1. Put 2 tbsp. of the oil, rosemary, garlic, and salt and pepper to taste in a shallow dish; stir to combine. Add steaks, turn to coat each piece, and arrange in a single layer. Cover dish with plastic wrap and let marinate at room temperature for 2 hours.

2. Heat 2 tbsp. oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add steaks and cook, turning once, until browned and medium rare, about 3 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate to let rest; cover loosely with foil. Discard oil and place skillet over medium heat (wipe out skillet if drippings have burned). Add wine and cook until reduced by half, about 1 minute. Add stock and jam and cook, whisking occasionally, until thickened, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat and add 2 tbsp. butter, a few cubes at a time, whisking constantly, to form a smooth sauce. Return skillet to heat and cook until just thickened, about 30 seconds. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Keep sauce warm.

3. Combine remaining oil, 2½ cups water, and milk in a medium pot; bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and add polenta in a steady stream while whisking constantly. Cook, stirring occasionally, until thickened and soft, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat, stir in remaining butter, and season with salt and pepper to taste.

4. Spoon polenta onto the center of each of 4 plates. Cut each steak on a slight bias lengthwise into ⅓"-thick slices; arrange over polenta. Spoon sauce over boar slices.

lightly smoked speck, the excellent Tyrolean bacon. Over lunch, Vali teased Traudl, saying that it was really she who should have married Karl Tinzl and that he surely would have fallen for her had she not come down with the measles and been forced to miss a crucial ball half a century ago. As the evening glow settled over the early spring afternoon, we said good-bye to Traudl and promised to stay in touch—although, sadly, we never met again.

ONE AUTUMN AFTERNOON three and a half decades later, I was sitting on the leafy patio of Bozen's Hotel Figl, waiting for the current resident of the Stadlerhof, Traudl's son George (named for his great-uncle, my great-grandfa-



Above left, wild boar and soft polenta with wine sauce; right, members of Bozen's town band. Facing page, top, potato ravioli with chanterelle mushrooms; bottom, vernatsch grapes.

Kettmeir (like Joergl, Franco is an economist), one of the Alto Adige's top wine producers, at his winery in Kaltern. As we sampled Kettmeir's wines, he briefed me on the Südtirol's thriving double economy, a combination of tourism and agriculture, and on its architecture, an intricate mix of Venetian Renaissance and Alpine design known as Überetscher Baustil. "Everything here is dual," he added with a chuckle, "east and west, north and south, Italian and Austrian, Mediterranean and Alpine. Even Bozen is both Italy's hottest and coldest city, steaming in summer but freezing in winter."

That evening we drove up to the town of Signat, which hangs over Bozen on the



ther). I had never met Joergl (as everybody calls him), but I knew I would recognize him, and it barely surprised me when he turned out to be a virtual reincarnation of my grandfather: same height, same complexion mottled from hours in the sun, same slight hesitation in his speech. It was as if my grandfather had been suspended in time, like Ötzi, the 5,300-year-old "ice man" in Bozen's archeological museum.

Joergl took immediate charge of my search for my long-lost Südtirolean family and the region's culinary traditions, sketching out a tasting and feasting map of the area's most interesting restaurants and inns. That first afternoon we went to meet his old friend Franco

side of the Ritten, the high meadowlands towering over the confluence of the Eisack (Isarco) and Talfer (Talvera) rivers. The Signaterhof, one of two excellent inns in Signat (the other is the Patscheiderhof), sits next to the town church and school and overlooks a vine- and apple tree-covered gorge. A slight fragrance of vinegar floated up the valley, the scent of ripe fruit ready to fall, while the cable car connecting Bozen with the Ritten glided silently across the wooded hillside in the twilight.

Erika Lobiser and her husband, Günther, run the Signaterhof—he is the chef—while their two sons, Mathias and Maximilian, attend the 14-student elementary school across



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RECIPE

Kartoffelteigtaschen mit Pfifferlingen

(Potato Ravioli with Chanterelle Mushrooms)

SERVES 4

These delicious ravioli get their gently chewy consistency from a dough that's made of boiled potatoes.

FOR THE FILLING:

1 tbsp. olive oil
1/2 small yellow onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
1/2 cup trimmed, finely chopped chanterelles (about 2 oz.)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 tsp. finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

FOR THE PASTA:

2-3 russet potatoes (2 lbs.), peeled and cut into 2" chunks
Salt
1 1/2 cups "00" flour (see page 102)
1 tsp. sweet wine, such as moscato
4 egg yolks

2 tbsp. olive oil
1/2 lb. chanterelles, trimmed, larger ones torn into small pieces
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 tbsp. butter
1/4 cup grated parmigiano-reggiano
1/4 cup small sprigs flat-leaf parsley

1. For the filling: Heat oil in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add onions and garlic and cook, stirring often, until softened, 3-4 minutes. Add chanterelles and salt and pepper to taste and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in parsley and transfer mixture to a bowl; set aside.

2. For the pasta: Put potatoes into a large pot, cover with salted water, and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain potatoes, return to pot, and dry slightly over medium-low heat, 4-5 minutes. Press potatoes through a potato ricer onto a large parchment paper-lined sheet pan in a single layer; let cool.

3. Put potatoes, flour, wine, yolks, and salt to taste into a large bowl; gently mix into a soft dough. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface; divide into 2 balls. Cover 1 ball with plastic wrap; refrigerate. Roll out remaining dough into a 10" x 14" rectangle; cut in half crosswise. Spoon some of the filling in 10 small mounds (1 generous tsp. each) on half the dough, keeping them spaced about 2" apart. Run a moistened finger around each mound to form a 2" square. Lay other half of rolled-out dough over mounds; press down in between mounds to seal ravioli. Using a ravioli cutter or a sharp knife, cut dough into ten 2"-square ravioli. Transfer to a lightly floured sheet pan. Repeat with remaining dough and filling.

4. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over medium-high heat. Gently drop in ravioli and simmer until floating and cooked through, about 10 minutes. Meanwhile, heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add chanterelles, season with salt and pepper to taste, and cook until softened, about 5 minutes. Transfer chanterelles to a bowl. Return skillet to heat, add butter, and cook until light brown, 3-4 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer ravioli to 4 plates. Top with mushrooms and parmigiano and drizzle with brown butter. Sprinkle with parsley.



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the street. Family pictures showing generations of dirndl-clad, leather-trousered Tyroleans embellish the restaurant's walls, and a ceramic-tiled stove by the door awaits winter. We tried a variety of Günther's creations, beginning with speckknödelsuppe, a traditional beef broth surrounding a speck-flecked dumpling; "ravioli" made of potato, filled with chanterelles and sprinkled with parmigiano and parsley; and roasted potatoes with a marvelously light fresh-cabbage salad spiked with speck and caraway seeds. A st. magdalener classico, made just downhill from Signat with vernatsch and lagrein grapes, accompanied dinner.

Joergl, who was exactly the age Traudl was when we first found her in Meran, filled me in on family history and on Dr. Karl Tinzl's tumultuous career. He was elected to the Italian Parliament in 1921 and not again



Above left, a corner of the garden at the Stadlerhof in Meran; right, Tyrolean butcher's platter. Facing page, central Bozen at dusk.

until 1954; jailed from time to time ("Father always told us not to worry. He was happiest when they treated him badly, and in jail he had no decisions to make"); and listed by the Nazis for execution as the Third Reich unraveled.

THE NEXT DAY, Saturday, was market day in Bozen, and by early morning the elegant Laubengasse, the porticoed shopping promenade at the center of town, was crowded with shoppers. At the Obstmarkt (Fruit Market), the hub of all the activity, I met my cousin

Kira, Joergl's daughter, and her husband, Tomas, for a stroll around town and a glass or two of local pinot grigio at the popular outdoor Fischbänke on Streitergasse, a former fishmonger's shop converted into a street tavern.

Joergl and his wife, Moni, joined me later for lunch near Mittelberg, above Bozen, at an inn called Pfoshof, where a bowlful of delicate, porcini-filled ravioli with parmigiano, chives, and splashes of thick balsamic vinegar offered proof positive that I was still in Italy. Later, in Meran, I was less sure when I found myself in the middle of a *Schützenfest*, where squads of firefighters and home guardsmen dressed in lederhosen and plumed Tyrolean hats all fully surrendered to a tuba-dominated brass band, steins of beer, and general hilarity.

A day later, I had a rendezvous with Monika Hellrigl at Vögele, the city's oldest and most



famous tavern, where we feasted on wild boar with red wine sauce and polenta. Monika is the daughter of the late Andrea Hellrigl, a masterly chef who once ran an elegant small hotel in Meran called Villa Mozart and then moved to New York City to be chef at the upscale (now defunct) Palio, where he was rechristened Andrea da Merano (which sounded a lot more Italian to American ears than Hellrigl did).

Over a meal a few hours later at the Figl, Monika told me how the present South Tyrol autonomy statute ensured that both Italian

RECIPE

Tiroler Schlachtplatte

(Tyrolean Butcher's Platter)

SERVES 6

Schlachten means to slaughter in German. This "slaughter platter", with its sausages and cuts of pork, is traditionally made when a hog is killed and butchered.

6 tbsp. butter
6 bratwursts (about 1 1/4 lbs.)
1 medium yellow onion, chopped
2 lbs. sauerkraut, drained and rinsed
4 cups beef broth
2 cups white wine
2 tbsp. yellow mustard seeds
1 1/2 tbsp. juniper berries, crushed
2 dried bay leaves
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
6 pork blade chops (about 6 lbs.)
1 1/2 lbs. pork loin
12 small yukon gold potatoes, peeled
2 tbsp. chopped flat-leaf parsley
2 tbsp. chopped chives
Dijon mustard

1. Heat 2 tbsp. butter in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add bratwursts and cook, turning occasionally, until well browned on all sides, about 6 minutes. Transfer bratwursts to a plate and set aside (wipe out pot if drippings have burned.) Return pot to medium-high heat and heat 2 tbsp. butter. Add onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned, 6-8 minutes. Stir in sauerkraut, broth, wine, mustard seeds, juniper berries, bay leaves, and salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer, covered, for 30 minutes.

2. Increase heat to medium-high; nestle chops and loin in sauerkraut. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, covered, for 30 minutes. Return bratwursts to pot and cook, covered, rearranging meat occasionally, until all meat is cooked through and just tender, 45-50 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, put potatoes into a medium pot and cover with salted water; bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until tender, about 8-10 minutes. Drain, leaving 2 tbsp. cooking liquid in pot. Add potatoes, remaining butter, 1 tsp. parsley, and salt and pepper to taste and gently toss to combine.

4. To serve: Remove pork loin from pot, transfer to a carving board, and carve into 1/4"-thick slices. Divide loin, bratwursts, blade chops, and potatoes between 6 plates. Drain sauerkraut and divide between plates. Garnish with remaining parsley and chives. Serve with mustard on the side.

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and German language and culture were respected in the region, and she explained the key role that Karl Tinzl had played in writing the original document. “Curiously,” she noted, “the cooking of the South Tyrol perfectly expresses this cultural cohabitation, a Germanic foundation with Latin finesse: a counterpoint of dumplings and parmigiano.”

The next morning Joergl invited me to meet him at Schloss Schöneck, a 12th-century castle he owns near Pfalzen, an hour north of Bozen. After a tour through the ramparts, rooms, and chapel of that sprawling hill-top fortress, which Joergl has been restoring over the past 20 years, we descended to the Schöneck restaurant, below its walls, where the proprietors—Karl Baumgartner; his wife, Mary; and his brother, Siegfried—greeted us with a demonstration of the ways in which Südtirolean cuisine, for all its Teutonic dumpplings, may offer tastes and textures as refined as any southern European chef can turn

out. First we had bauchspeck, mountain-cured pork belly lightly smoked in birch. Next came dark carob-flour ravioli filled with almkäse (cows’ milk cheese made by Karl’s brother Hansi, a famed cheese maker from Brixen), followed by fragrant wood pigeon on red onions with a sauce made from balsamic vinegar, brown sugar, red wine must, and wild cranberries. The sweet closing argument was fritelle di mele, thick slices of batter-fried apple rolled in sugar and cinnamon, sprinkled with mint, and served with an aromatic cranberry compote.

The following day Joergl took me to another 12th-century castle, Schloss Rubein, this one located a hundred yards from the Semler house in Meran. The castle, which is the preserve of an old friend of Joergl’s, Gräfin (Countess) Eliane du Parc-von Holzschuler, contains a second-floor loggia with a 15th-century chapel and a hall with overhead frescoes by



Bartholomäus Riemenschneider. After a walk along the Passer (Passirio) River, we passed the 13th-century Sankt Georgenkirche, stopping to listen as a lovely Bach cantata poured forth from the choir loft. Dinner up in Schenna at the Thurnerhof featured a simple filet mignon smothered in porcini with six perfect potato croquettes and a Thurnerhofbrett’l—a board of speck, prosciutto, sausage, and cheese. Also on hand were several bottles of Muri-Gries Riserva Abtei Lagrein 1991, tasting of chocolatey minerals and berries, made by Swiss monks near Bozen and widely considered the Südtirol’s finest bottle of wine.

RECIPE

Fritelle di Mele alla Cannella con Composta di Mirtilli Rossi

(Cinnamon Apple Fritters with Cranberry Compote)

SERVES 4

These fritters, a version of those served at Schöneck, are essentially Südtirol-style apple doughnuts.

FOR THE CRANBERRY COMPOTE:

1/4 lb. fresh or frozen cranberries (about 1 cup)
1/4 cup sugar
1 1/2 tsp. kirsch

1 tbsp. canola oil
1/2 tsp. vanilla sugar (see page 102)
2 egg yolks
2 egg whites
Pinch of salt
1 tbsp. granulated sugar

FOR THE CINNAMON APPLE FRITTERS:

2 granny smith apples
2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
1 cup flour
1 cup light beer

1 cup granulated sugar
1 tbsp. ground cinnamon
Canola oil for frying
2 tsp. chopped mint

1. For the cranberry compote: Put cranberries, sugar, and 2 tbsp. water into a small pot and bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, stirring often, until cranberries have begun to soften and split, 8-10 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in kirsch. Transfer to a small bowl and let cool.

2. For the cinnamon apple fritters: Peel and core apples; cut each crosswise into 9 slices. Transfer slices to a medium bowl and toss with lemon juice; set aside. Whisk together flour and beer in a medium bowl. Add oil, vanilla sugar, and yolks; stir to make a batter. Put egg whites and salt into a medium bowl and beat until stiff peaks form. Add granulated sugar and gently whisk to combine. Gently fold egg whites into batter.

3. To assemble: Stir sugar and cinnamon together in a medium bowl; set aside. Pour oil into a large pot to a depth of 2" and heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer registers 350°. Working in batches and using a fork, dip each apple slice in batter, shake off excess, and fry until golden brown on all sides, 4-5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer fritters to a paper towel-lined plate; let drain briefly. Toss fritters in sugar mixture to coat. Divide fritters between 4 plates. Spoon a little compote onto each plate and sprinkle with mint. Serve immediately.

Below, cinnamon apple fritters with cranberry compote. Facing page, Restaurant Schöneck.





SÜDTIROL

THE GUIDE

SÜDTIROL

COUNTRY CODE: 39 EXCHANGE RATE: 1 euro = \$1.30

Dinner with drinks, tax, and tip:

EXPENSIVE Over \$50 MODERATE \$25–\$50 INEXPENSIVE Under \$25

ON THE LAST DAY, we met at the Stadlerhof for a family lunch prepared by Moni and Kira. Joergl showed us his wine cellar and then the garden, its grape arbor heavy with lagrein and vernatsch grapes. Eventually we got to the meal, which included spinach gnocchi, cheese gnocchi, and a schlachtplatte, “butcher’s platter” or “slaughter platter” (in reference to the annual pig killing that yields several of its elements), consisting of pork loin and chops, hauswurst (pork sausage), sauerkraut, and potatoes. The wine, a red Meraner Weinkellerei Eines Fürsten Traum Vernatsch 2004, gave Joergl a chance to teach me the Tyrolean hunters’ greeting, “Weidmannsheil!” (“To the noble hunter!”). “These teuflisch [fiendish] wineglasses,” he added, “have leaks that allow the wine to run down your arm and evaporate!”

Upstairs were portraits of my great-great grandfather, my great-grandfather and his brother Ernst, and my grandfather Ralph and his brother George Herbert as four- and five-year-olds—some century and a half of us in all, the rows of faces as familiar to me as my own or those of my father, George, or uncle Ralph. I wished them all a “Weidmannsheil!”

THE PANTRY, page 102: Sources for Tyrolean bacon, wild boar, “00” flour, and vanilla sugar.



WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL FIGL Kornplatz 9, Bozen (0471/978412; www.figl.net). Rates: \$128–\$140 double. The Mayr family’s friendly and simple 22-room hotel in the middle of Bozen has been modernized with sleek, minimalist materials (mostly glass and wood).

PARKHOTEL LAURIN Laurinstraße 4, Bozen (0471/311000; www.laurin.it). Rates: \$211–\$301 double. This elegant hotel has 96 comfortable rooms, and the hotel bar and café (moderate) is one of Bozen’s most popular meeting spots.

SCHLOSS RUBEIN Christomannostrasse 38, Meran (0473/231894; www.rubein.com). Rate: \$256 double. Countess Eliane du Parc—von Holzschuler’s 12th-century castle has been home over the centuries to many illustrious Südtirol families. With a private chapel and stunning Riemenschneider frescoes in the loggia, the place offers a splendid taste of a time long past.

WHERE TO EAT

PFOSHOF Oberlengmoos 5, Ritten (0471/356723). Inexpensive. Jakob and Monika Gamper run this 19th-century Gasthof, serving such pure Südtirolean specialties as porcini-filled ravioli. The hike from the Lengmoos out to Mittelberg and the Erd-

pyramiden—“earth pyramids” caused by erosion—is the perfect pre- or post-prandial trek.

RESTAURANT SCHÖNECK Schloss-Schöneck-Strasse 11, Kiens (0474/565550; www.schoeneck.it). Expensive. This establishment, located near Schöneck castle, serves some of the most refined cuisine in the area. Chef Karl Baumgartner’s specialties include birch-smoked speck and game dishes in the Südtirol style.

THURNERHOF Verdinserstrasse 26, Schenna (0473/945702; www.thurnerhof-schenna.com). Moderate. This classic Wirtshaus (tavern) serves fine regional fare. Don’t miss the Thurnerhofbrett’l, a spread of cured meats and cheese.

VÖGELE Goethestrasse 3, Bozen (0471/973938; www.voegle.it). Moderate. Bozen’s most famous and traditional dining haunt serves excellent Alpine fare with Italian hints, such as wild game and various types of ravioli and gnocchi.

WHERE TO STAY AND EAT

HOTEL ELEPHANT Weisslahnstrasse 4, Brixen (0472/832750; www.hotelelephant.com). Rates: \$90–\$136 double. A famous South Tyrolean institution dating from 1449, this 43-room gem has wonderfully

creaky floors, a stately bar, and three dining rooms (expensive) serving fine cuisine.

PARKHOTEL HOLZNER Oberbozen, Ritten (0471/345231;



www.parkhotel-holzner.com). Rates: \$95–\$125 double. The Holzner family’s Alpiner Jugendstil (Art Nouveau) clubhouse may be the best place to stay in or around Bozen. The dining room (expensive) offers fine food, including black tagliolini with leeks, shrimp, and saffron sauce and filet of venison.

SIGNATERHOF Signat 166, Signat (0471/365353). Rate: \$80 double. Günther and Erika Lobiser’s comfortable inn, overlooking Bozen from the southern face of the Ritten (the high plateau above Bozen), offers excellent Alpine cuisine (moderate) in a family atmosphere of good taste and simplicity. Speckknödelsuppe (Tyrolean bacon-dumpling soup) is a specialty.



MEET VIRGINIA

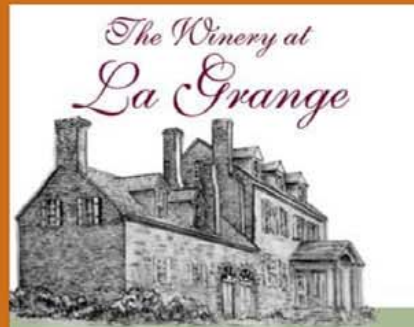
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Between tastings, immerse yourself in any of October's fifty fall festivals. Antique galleries abound, and whether it's five-star dining, indulging your soulful side with a double helping of blues or unwinding at a graceful B&B, our autumn activities are almost unlimited. And while Virginia will leave you breathless, you'll always find time to breathe.



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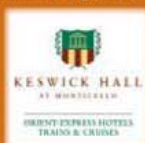
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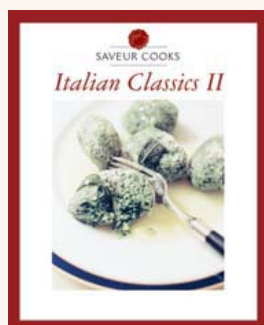
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IN THE SAVEUR KITCHEN

Techniques and Discoveries from Our Editors and Recipe Testers

Comfort Toast

MY MATERNAL grandmother, Evelyn Jones, had a knack for making a little bit of meat go a long way. That talent proved particularly useful when my grandfather William (below, right) returned home to Florida after World War II. While serving in the navy, he developed a fondness for creamed chipped beef on toast (see recipe, page 20), also known among servicemen

as “shit on a shingle”. To satisfy his cravings, my grandmother regularly made creamed chipped beef, but instead of calling it by its dysphemism she created her own term: “apcray on apcray” (pseudo pig Latin for crap on crap). As she broadened her repertoire so that it included other creamed proteins, like chicken or tuna (below, left)—a favorite of mine from the time I was little—those variations were also referred to by the same designation. To this day my mother carries on the apcray on apcray tradition, and so do I. Not only are these creamed dishes economical, comforting, and really delicious; they would, I think, make my grandfather proud. —*Liz Pearson*



Apcray on apcray, left. Above, William Jones, the author's grandfather, in 1945.

RECIPE

Apcray on Apcray

(Creamed Tuna on Toast)

SERVES 4

To feed a larger crowd, Evelyn Jones often expanded a version of this recipe with more white sauce or vegetables. She also sometimes substituted boiled chicken for the tuna.

1 tbsp. butter
1 small white onion, finely chopped
1 rib celery, finely chopped
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 cups milk
1/4 cup flour
2 cups frozen green peas
1 6-oz. can water-packed tuna, drained
2 tbsp. drained, chopped pimientos
1/4 tsp. poultry seasoning
2 hard-boiled eggs, finely chopped
8 pieces sandwich bread, preferably whole wheat, toasted

1. Heat butter in a medium pot over medium heat. Add onions, celery, and salt and pepper to taste and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 6-8 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl and set aside.

2. Add milk to pot, whisk in flour, and bring to a boil, whisking occasionally, over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook, stirring constantly, until thickened, 6-8 minutes. Return onion mixture to the pot along with the peas, tuna, pimientos, poultry seasoning, eggs, and salt and pepper to taste and stir to combine. Cook, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened and heated through, 8-10 minutes. Ladle creamed tuna over toast and serve immediately.



KITCHEN

Golden Treat

RECIPE

Oven-Dried Spicy Pineapple Snacks

MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS

This Southeast Asian combination of sweet, salty, spicy, and tart flavors makes a great cocktail snack. You may also leave the pineapple overnight in a gas oven, turned off; the heat from the pilot light will dry the fruit.

- 2 ripe pineapples, peeled, cored, and cut into 3/4"-1" chunks (see page 79)
- 1/4 cup demerara sugar
- 2 tsp. sea salt, preferably Maldon
- 1 tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 2 thai chiles, stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped
- Zest from 2 limes

1. Preheat oven to 225°. Divide pineapple chunks between 2 large baking sheets and spread out in a single layer. Bake, rotating pans and flipping pineapple chunks halfway through, until chunks are light golden brown and dried around the edges but still juicy in the center, about 4 1/2 hours. Transfer pans to a cooling rack; let pineapple cool to room temperature.

2. Put sugar, salt, nutmeg, chiles, and zest into a medium bowl and stir to combine. Add pineapple and toss to coat. Transfer to a serving bowl and serve immediately.

When researching our pineapple feature (see page 74), we heard about one recipe that we *had* to try: for oven-dried spicy pineapple snacks (below). Created by pastry chef Pichet Ong for his new Manhattan restaurant P*ONG, it involves tossing oven-dried pineapple chunks with flaky sea salt, chiles, and lime zest. The interplay of ingredients is tantalizing, but the pineapple's semidry flesh is what makes the dish irresistible: it's chewy, vaguely juicy, and bursting with flavor. —*Sophie von Haselberg*



A Leg Up

PORK HOCKS—whether smoked, which makes them ham hocks (below, left), or fresh (below, right)—add soul to many dishes, often transforming mundane ingredients into something special. They do just that in such Southern staples as hoppin'

john and stewed mustard greens; ditto for the Vietnamese noodle soup called bún bò hué (see page 48). In that dish, fresh hocks, sliced crosswise into round disks, lend flavor and body to the broth and are great to nibble on as well. But what are pork hocks, exactly? Investigating the matter, we learned that they're just cross sections of a hog's leg, cut from either at or just above the knee joint on the front leg or at or just above the hock joint on the back leg. However you slice them, pork hocks—consisting of skin, bone, meat, collagen, and fat—are the epitome of pork. —*Todd Coleman*



ANDRÉ BARANOWSKI (2)

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31 Virginia Tourism

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WINE & SPIRITS

33 Barboursville Vineyards & Palladio Restaurant

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34 Breaux Vineyards

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36 Keswick Vineyards

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38 Oregon Pinot Noir Club

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40 Paso Robles

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42 Sam's Wine and Spirits

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43 St. Supery Vineyards & Winery

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45 White Hall Vineyards

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46 Winery at La Grange

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911 All in Wine & Spirits Category

THE PANTRY

A Guide to Resources

*In producing the stories for this issue,
we discovered food products and
kitchenware too good to keep to ourselves.
Please feel free to raid our pantry!*

BY LIZ PEARSON

Fare

If you'd like to cook a bit of **llama** yourself, contact ExoticMeats.Com (800/680-4375; www.exoticmeats.com) to purchase llama top sirloin roast or ground llama patties (\$16.50 and \$9.95 per pound, respectively). For the Oakville Ranch **wine** listed in One Good Bottle, call Oakville Ranch (707/944-9326). To buy the sliced **dried beef** (\$10.29 for six 2.5-ounce jars) you'll need for making creamed chipped beef on toast, order from Hormel (800/523-4635; www.hormel.com).

List

If you're eating your way across the United States, consider stopping at one of our favorite food towns. In **Apalachicola, Florida**, visit Red Top Café (238 Highway 98; 850/653-8612); Seafood-2-Go Retail Market Inc. (229 West Highway 98; 850/653-8044); Piggly Wiggly (130 Highway 98; 850/653-8768); Avenue Sea (51 Avenue C; 850/653-2193); and Papa Joe's Oyster Bar & Grill (301-B Market Street; 850/653-1189). In **Ashland, Oregon**, stop by Chateaulin (50 East Main Street; 541/482-2264); Amuse (15 North First Street; 541/488-9000); New Sammy's Cowboy Bistro (2210 South Pacific Highway, Talent, Oregon; 541/535-2779); Winchester Inn Restaurant and Wine Bar (35 South Second Street; 541/488-1113); and Allyson's of Ashland (115 East Main Street; 541/482-2884). In **Burlington, Vermont**, don't miss the Burlington Farmers Market (College Street and City Hall Park; 888/889-8198), which sells cheeses from Willow Hill Farm; City Market (82 South Winooski Avenue; 802/863-3659); Red Hen Baking

Company (4278 Vermont Route 100, Duxbury, Vermont; 802/244-0966; www.redhenbaking.com); A Single Pebble (133 Bank Street; 802/865-5200; www.asinglepebble.com); Bistro Sauce (97 Falls Road, Shelburne; 802/985-2830; www.bistrosauce.com); and Sneakers Bistro & Café (36 Main Street, Winooski, Vermont; 802/655-9081; www.sneakersbistro.com). In **Chapel Hill, North Carolina**, drop by the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Farmer's Market (on the Carrboro Town Commons, near the intersection of West Weaver and West Main streets; 919/932-1641); Allen & Son B-Q (6203 Millhouse Road; 919/942-7576); Crook's Corner (610 West Franklin Street; 919/929-7643); Lantern (423 West Franklin Street; 919/969-8846); and Fiesta Grill (3307 N.C. Highway 54; 919/928-9002). In **Lawrence, Kansas**, visit Free State Brewing Co. (636 Massachusetts Street; 785/843-4555); WheatFields Bakery (904 Vermont Street; 785/841-5553); Pachamama's (800 New Hampshire Street; 785/841-0990); Tortas Jalesco (534 Frontier Road; 785/865-1515); Amy's Meats (2548 Wallace Road; call ahead to make an appointment; 785/691-6251; www.amysmeats.com); and the Downtown Lawrence Farmers' Market (824 New Hampshire Street; 785/331-4445), which sells produce from Wakarusa Valley Farms and meat from Amy's Meats (see above).

Kitchenwise

John and Lynn Pleshette's Los Angeles, California, kitchen, constructed by Los Angeles-based Sandy Falcon of HF Builders (323/461-7352), contains the following items: Miele dishwasher (800/843-7231; www.miele.com), Viking ovens (888/845-4641; www.vikingrange.com), Wolf cooktop (800/332-9513; www.subzero.com), Vent-a-Hood ventilation hood (800/331-2492; www.ventahood.com), Traulsen refrigerator (800/825-8220; www.traulsen.com), and NAD stereo components (800/263-4633; www.nadelectronics.com). To receive the "John Pleshette's Meal of the Week" e-mails, contact Pleshette at arugola@pacbell.net to join the distribution list.

Cellar

For the aglianico-based **wines** listed in our tasting notes, contact Vinity Wine Company (510/601-6010) for De Conciliis; Palm Bay Imports (800/872-5622) for Feudi di San Gregorio; Montecastelli Selections (212/414-4898) for Elena Fucci, Macarico, and Paternoster; Wilson Daniels (707/963-9661) for Mastroberardino; Michael Skurnik (516/677-9300) or Vin Divino (773/334-6700) for Molettieri; Vitis Imports (310/451-0999) for Mustilli; and Siena Imports (415/285-9675) for Terre degli Svevi.

Memories

To make rose napoleons, buy **rose water** (\$5.49 for a 10-ounce bottle) from Kalustyan's (800/352-3451; www.kalustyans.com).

Classic

Uwajimaya (800/889-1928; www.uwajimaya.com) sells **annatto** seeds (\$3.99 for a 2-ounce package), Vietnamese **fish sauce** (\$2.89 for a 24-ounce bottle), Chinese **rock sugar** (\$1.39 for a 1-pound package), fine **shrimp sauce** (\$2.19 for a 12-ounce jar), and Vietnamese rice **noodles** (\$0.89 for a 14-ounce bag; ask for large round "bún") for the Hué-style spicy beef and rice noodle soup. Buy Vietnamese **coriander** (prices vary; ask for "rau răm") from Melissa's/World Variety Produce (800/588-0151; www.melissas.com).

Mexican-American Winery

To taste **wines** from the Robledo Family Winery, stop by its tasting room (21901 Bonness Road, Sonoma, California; 707/939-6903; www.robledofamilywinery.com) or contact the winery directly. For the Mi Sueño wines in our tasting notes, call Mi Sueño Winery (707/258-6358; www.misuenowinery.com). Contact Kitchen/Market (888/468-4433; www.kitchenmarket.com) to buy all the dried **chiles** for the pork and hominy stew, three-chile salsa, and quail braised in tomatillo-chile sauce (prices are for each 2-ounce package: cascabel chiles, \$6.55; pasilla chiles, \$4.55; new mexico chiles, \$2.50; árbol chiles, \$2.55; and pulla chiles, \$3.45). It also sells Mexican **brown sugar** (\$2.45 for an 8-ounce package; ask for "piloncillo") for the candied squash and sweet potatoes and **cotija cheese** (\$5.95 per pound) for the poblano chiles stuffed with beef and cheese. To buy whole **quail** (\$10.95 for each 4-pack) to make the quail braised in tomatillo-chile sauce, call ExoticMeats.Com (800/680-4375; www.exoticmeats.com).

SAVEUR (ISSN 1075-7864) Issue: No. 96, October 2006. SAVEUR is published nine times per year (January/February, March, April, May, June/July, August/September, October, November, and December) by World Publications, LLC, 460 N. Orlando Ave., Suite 200, Winter Park, FL 32789. Copyright 2006, all rights reserved. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part without consent of the copyright owner. Periodicals postage paid at Winter Park, Fla., and additional mailing offices. SUBSCRIPTIONS: U.S., \$29.95 for one year, \$49.95 for two years. Foreign surface mail to Canada: \$38.95 for one year; to other foreign destinations: \$47.95. For subscription information, please call 877/717-8925. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SAVEUR, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. For faster service, please enclose your current subscription label. EDITORIAL: Send correspondence to Editorial Department, SAVEUR, 304 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010; e-mail: saveur@worldpub.net. We welcome all editorial submissions but assume no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. Retail sales discounts available; contact Circulation Department. The following are trademarks of SAVEUR and World Publications, and their use by others is strictly prohibited: IN THE SAVEUR KITCHEN, SAVEUR FARE, SAVEUR MOMENT.

Takler

For **wines** from Takler Winery and Vylyan Winery, contact Monarchia Matt International (516/845-4646). ExoticMeats.Com (800/680-4375; www.exoticmeats.com) sells leg of **venison** (\$14.95 per pound) for making venison goulash. To buy hot Hungarian **paprika** (\$3.99 for a 4-ounce package) for the same recipe, as well as for the baked carp with sour cream sauce and the bean soup with “pinched” pasta, call Kalustyan’s (800/352-3451; www.kalustyans.com), which also carries **vanilla sugar** (\$1.99 for a 25-gram package; ask for Dr. Oetker brand) for making the grape-filled strudel with wine sauce.

Pineapple

To make the pineapple and jicama salad, buy dried **shrimp paste** (\$4.99 for a 250-gram package; ask for “belacan”), Indonesian **palm sugar** (\$4.99 for a 500-gram package; ask for “gula jawa”), and Indonesian sweet **soy sauce** (\$6.99 for a 33-ounce bottle; ask for “kecap manis”) from Kalustyan’s (800/352-3451; www.kalustyans.com). Kitchen/Market (888/468-4433; www.kitchenmarket.com) sells Mexican **cinnamon** (\$2.50 for a 2-ounce package; ask for “canela”) for making the Mexican-style fermented pineapple drink and the mole with chicken, pork, and pineapple, Mexican **brown sugar** (\$2.45 for an 8-ounce package; ask for “piloncillo”) for the Mexican-style fermented pineapple drink, and dried ancho **chiles** (\$3.60 for a 2-ounce package) for the mole with chicken, pork, and pineapple.

Südtirol

Dean & DeLuca’s SoHo store, in New York City (800/999-0306), sells Tyrolean **bacon** (\$20 per pound; ask for “speck”) for the Tyrolean bacon-dumpling soup. For **wild boar** loin (\$19.80 per pound) for the wild boar and soft polenta with wine sauce, call ExoticMeats.Com (800/680-4375; www.exoticmeats.com). Dean & DeLuca (above) also carries “00” **flour** (\$4.75 for a 1,000-gram bag) for the potato ravioli with chanterelle mushrooms. For **vanilla sugar** for the cinnamon apple fritters with cranberry compote, see Takler (above).

Correction

In our June/July 2006 issue, botanist Ilyas Marzuki was misquoted in the “Nutmeg Islands” article. The amount of volatile oil in nutmeg is 15 percent, not 50 percent, and the amount of volatile oil in mace is higher than that of the nutmeg seed, not lower.

- We regret that a software error caused some of the text in the chicken satay recipe in Fare, August/September 2006, to appear in the wrong font.

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During the past two years, Sam's has opened two additional stores, in suburban Downers Grove and Highland Park. The company is run by brothers Darryl and Brian Rosen, grandsons of founder Sam Rosen and sons of longtime owner Fred Rosen.

Sam's is open all day, every day, at samswine.com—the Internet address for descriptions and prices for everything offered at Sam's, as well as the place to find wine futures, pre-offers, and Internet-only sales.

Marcey Street Market is Sam's in-store gourmet emporium, with an unequaled selection of cheeses (more than 250), olive oils, vinegars, sausages, cured meats, pasta and rices, smoked fish, chocolates, condiments, and much more—all of it obtainable online.

"Our Internet sales are definitely up," says Reysa Samuels, director of Marcey Street Market. "At least 10 percent a year. Interestingly, it's less cheese—our strong suit—that's growing and more the other things."

"Vinegars, oils," adds Matt Kulpa, assistant director of the market. "We have many difficult-to-find items that few other stores

stock. Those often are the things that people buy on our site."

"For instance," says Kulpa, "one gentleman came through on a visit to Chicago and noticed that we sell Peppadew Stuffed Peppers from South Africa. Now, this guy lives on Park Avenue in Manhattan—and he cannot find Peppadews in New York City. So, he orders them from us online all the time."

"What I'm most proud of," says Samuels, "is Marcey Street Market's selection and our commitment to quality."

Sam's also sells a huge amount of wine online, both on samswine.com and via daily e-mail offers. "The Internet revolution allows us to easily inform our customers about wines they should have in their cellars or with friends and family. It is a very powerful selling and teaching tool," says Darryl Rosen, the president and CFO of Sam's.

"Selling via e-mail is great," says Chris Durbin, head wine sales specialist for e-commerce sales. "We have the ability to send information immediately to a customer base of more than 33,000 people. We can sell 100 to 150 cases of a wine in a matter of hours."

Durbin loves the e-mail "perfect storm" of "a good price, a review over 90 points, and a wine that people are looking for."

Nearly every case of Sam's bordeaux futures—an increasingly active wine market—is handled by e-mail, by phone, or online at samswine.com.

Says Durbin, "The future is online."

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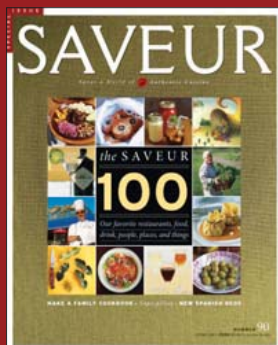


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M O M E N T



TIME 5:00 P.M., October 5, 2005; first night of Ramadan

PLACE Multan, Pakistan

This street vendor's seviyan (wheat vermicelli cakes) really stack up against the competition's.

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